

National FOIA Portal

Agency Manager Guide

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Login

After setting up your account at MAX.gov, visit <https://admin.foia.gov/user/login> to login:

1. Click the “Login via MAX.gov” link (**Note:** you do NOT need to fill out the username and password fields).
2. After being redirected to MAX.gov, click the “Login with PIV/CAC” button on their site.
3. Assuming all went well, you should now be logged into the portal and on your user page.

Agency

View

Once you are logged in, you can view your agency by clicking on the link for the agency on your user page. This page will display high-level agency information followed by a list of agency components belonging to your agency. Centralized agencies are represented in the system as agencies with a single agency component. Click the double chevrons at the bottom of the page to scroll through the list of components. You may wish to bookmark and/or note the URL of your agency so you can easily return to it later.

Edit

To edit your agency from the agency view page click the Edit tab beneath the agency name. From here you may edit the following fields:

- Name
- Abbreviation
- Agency Seal (this is not currently being used)
- Description

Relations should remain default (<root> should be the only selection in the Parent terms field and Weight can remain 0).

Agency Component

View

To view a component start at your agency URL and click either the name of the component or the “Read more” link in the row of the component you wish to view.

Edit

To edit an agency component click the Edit tab from the component view page. From the component edit form you can modify any or all of the following fields to suit the needs of a given component:

Field Name	Field Type	Explanation/Description
Agency Component Name	Text	Name of the component
Abbreviation	Text	Component abbreviation (e.g. OIP for Office of Information Policy)
Agency Component Description	Rich Text	Brief description of the component
Telephone	Telephone	Should be entered in the format XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email	Email	General email addresses for the agency component
Reading Rooms	URL	Fully qualified URLs
FOIA Officers	FOIA Personnel	See personnel description below
Public Liaisons	FOIA Personnel	See personnel section below
Service Centers	FOIA Personnel	See personnel section below
Misc	FOIA Personnel	See personnel section below
Website	URL	Agency component website

Paper submissions: Receiver	FOIA Personnel	See personnel section below
Paper submissions: Submission Address	Address	Address to send paper FOIA requests to. When United States is selected for the Country field, required Street address, City, State, and Zip code fields are revealed. The second line under Street address is not required.
Submission Fax	Telephone	Should be completed in the XXX-XXX-XXXX format
Submission Web	URL	Web address to submit FOIA requests for the agency component (if available).
Portal Submission Options: Portal Submission Format	Select	The preferred method by which this component should be forwarded FOIA requests. If Email is selected the "Submission Email" field under "Email submissions" is required. If API is selected both of the fields under "API Submissions" are required.
Portal Submission Options: Submission Email	Email	Email address which the portal should forward FOIA requests to (if the Portal Submission Format field value is "Email")
Portal Submission Options: Submission API URL	URL	URL which the portal should forward FOIA requests to (if the Portal Submission Format field value is "API") - MUST be https
Portal Submission Options: Submission API Shared Secret	Text	Secret key which the portal should send along with each forwarded FOIA request when transmitting requests to

		the component via API. This provides a means for the agency to ensure that API requests are from the portal.
Revision log message	Text	Brief description of changes made

Click the Save button to complete changes.

Personnel

A handful of fields associate FOIA Personnel with Agency Components. FOIA Personnel are people who work for your agency and/or the agency components within your agency. The National FOIA Portal classifies the personnel into the five different fields mentioned in the table above. These are:

- FOIA Officers
- Public Liaisons
- Services Centers
- Misc
- Paper Submissions Receiver

New and/or existing personnel can be added to these fields. It is best to check if personnel already exist in the portal prior to adding new personnel to avoid duplication.

Existing

To check for existing personnel press the “Add existing foia personnel” button. An autocomplete Foia Personnel field will be revealed. Begin typing the name of the personnel you wish to add. If and when you see the name of the existing personnel you wish to add either click the name or use the arrow keys on your keyboard to select the name then press either the enter or return key on your keyboard. Press the “Add foia personnel” button to associate the personnel with the component or press the Cancel button if you can not find the existing personnel.

Add

To add new personnel press the “Add new foia personnel” button. This will reveal six fields that can be used to create the new personnel. Begin typing the agency name of the personnel into the autocomplete agency field. When you see the agency name either click it or use the arrow keys on your keyboard to select it and press the enter or return key on your keyboard to fill the autocomplete field. The Name, Title, and Email Address fields can be completed for the personnel. One or more phone numbers can be added to the phone number field in the XXX-XXX-XXXX format. To add additional phone numbers press the “Add another item” button.

A revision log message may be noted for auditing purposes. Press the “Create foia personnel” button to add the new personnel or press the Cancel button to return to editing other fields in the component.

Edit

To edit personnel that are already associated with a component press the Edit button to the right of the personnel name. This will reveal the personnel fields as described above in [the add section](#). When edits are complete press the “Update foia personnel” button to save the edits.

Remove

To remove personnel press the Remove button to the right of the name of the personnel you wish to delete. This will reveal a confirmation. To confirm check the “Delete this foia personnel from the system.” checkbox then press the Remove button. To cancel the personnel removal press the Cancel button.

FOIA Request Forms

Verify that request forms for components match expectations

Please review the FOIA request form for each agency component in your agency to ensure that the fields in the form are consistent with the information the component needs to gather as part of each FOIA request. To locate the forms for your agency's components go to <https://stg-www.foia.gov/> and press the "Start your request" button or scroll down to the heading that reads "Select an agency to start your request or to see an agency's contact information:". In the autocomplete search field where it says "Type agency name" begin typing either the name of the agency or the agency component you wish to review. If the autocomplete displays a single name then it is a top level agency. Select an entity by clicking it or using the up and down arrows on your keyboard to select it and then the return or enter keys to execute the selection. If the entity is a top level agency a list of agency components will be displayed and one of those components can be clicked upon to view the component page. If the entity is an agency component, selecting it will display the component page without the need for an additional click. From the component page press the "Start FOIA request" button to view the form for that component. Review all the fields in the form to ensure that they encompass the information required for the component.

Help

If you need assistance please email National.FOIAPortal@usdoj.gov.

Purpose - This is the next iteration of our [Understanding FOIA page](#). It will adapt what's currently there into something hopefully more useful for users.

It's clear that there is going to be a lot of information here. A. Lot. I'm sure we'll find a great first step in displaying this to our users, but it's worth rethinking how we view managing this content in the long run. Do we stand up Answers?

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Next Iteration

What is FOIA?

Since 1966, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has granted the public the right to request access to any agency records. Under FOIA, agencies are required to disclose any information requested unless it falls under a specific set of [exemptions](#) or [exclusions](#).

The public's right to request records has served as the backbone for information disclosure in the United States. Records released under FOIA have led to the publication of many important news stories and greater public awareness around government activities.

Why would I make a FOIA request?

While the Federal Government makes a lot of information [available](#) in many [places](#), you may still seek information that has not already been publicly released. FOIA makes it possible to access records that are not yet publicly available.

What can I ask for?

You can file a FOIA request for any "agency record." This is a broad term that covers things like books, papers, maps, photographs, emails, machine-readable materials, and other documentary materials. You can also specify whether you would like to receive these records in electronic or paper formats as well.

Is there a special form I have to use to make a FOIA request?

There is no specific form that must be used to make a request. All you need to do is write a description of the information you are seeking and comply with any agency-specific requirements. Those requirements are set out in agencies' FOIA regulations.

Your written description must be specific enough that agency FOIA professionals can understand what you are seeking and properly conduct a search. Information such as time periods, specific names, topics, or key words related to the information you are seeking will help inform the agency.

Who can file a FOIA request?

Any person can file a FOIA request.

What's the process like? - [#265](#)

What happens after I make my FOIA request?

A lot happens behind the scenes after an agency receives your FOIA request. Agencies each have their own specific way of processing a request. The first step is to determine which offices may have responsive records and search for those records. Once an office has located records and provided them back to the FOIA shop, the FOIA team may consult subject matter experts, lawyers, or other agency officials to review them for release. This step may also include redacting any non-public information.

Once the agency has completed this process, any public records will be released to you.

How long does it take to fulfill my request?

Response time varies between agencies and also depends on the complexity of the request. The standard time limit established by FOIA is 20 business days, but some requests are more complex and will require more time.

Agencies may also request an extension in “unusual” or “exceptional” circumstances and may pause the request clock to [clarify the request](#). If an agency gets an extension, it will notify you. During this time, the agency will provide you with an opportunity to modify the scope of the request to help improve the response time.

Another option is to agree to a different timetable for processing the request. You can work with the agency's FOIA Public Liaison or other FOIA contacts to discuss this option. You should always feel free to contact the agency to check on the status of your request. Agencies are required to provide an estimated response date upon request.

What happens if I'm not satisfied with the response I received?

If you disagree with agency's decision on your request, you can file an appeal by writing to the agency. Agencies review appeals independently and inform you whether your appeal is granted or denied. FOIA also provides for a 20 business day time frame for appeal responses, but, similarly, response times vary based on an agency's workload and the complexity of your appeal.

Sometimes an appeal isn't the best route. Before filing an appeal, you might want to try contacting the agency that handled the request either through your FOIA contact or the FOIA

Public Liaison who is there to help you throughout the FOIA process and help resolve any disputes. Contact for every agency's FOIA Public Liaison is listed on www.foia.gov.

If the appeal process is complete and you are not yet satisfied, you can also seek mediation services from the FOIA Ombudsman's office, the [Office of Government Information Services](#) at the National Archives and Records Administration.

Why are there fees?

There isn't a fee to file the request and in many cases there won't be any fees charged to the requester. However, agencies have the option to recoup the cost associated with fulfilling a FOIA request.

You may have the ability to waive a fee, depending on what kind of requester you are.

Does a fee waiver apply to me?

Maybe. The FOIA breaks requesters into a number of categories. Respondents that fall into some of these categories may have their fees waived if it is of public interest. These categories are:

Commercial: these requesters are asking for information to further their profit or commercial interests. These requesters pay all fees for search, review, and duplication

Educational, Non-Commercial Scientific, or News Media: these requesters are asking for information for the public interest. It's usually for scholarly research, to further scientific research, or in gathering news to be published or broadcasted. These requesters may only be charged for duplication costs, if that.

Other: these requesters don't fall into any of the other categories and are usually making a request for personal use. These requesters may be charged a fee, but many agencies will often give these requesters two hours of search, all review costs, and the first 100 pages at no cost.

Why do some agencies have requirements that others don't?

The FOIA allows agencies to craft their own regulations around how they process FOIA requests. These regulations are usually around how the agency charges fees or where the request has to be sent within the agency for it to be processed. This means that some agencies will have requirements that must be fulfilled that others don't and leads to differences between how agencies will process requests.

Why can't I just send you my FOIA request?

While it'd be great if we could process the request for you, agencies make the determination of how to respond to a request. It's not something we are able to do. But, we hope to soon launch a new feature that will allow you to send a request to certain agencies directly.

More about FOIA - [#264](#)

Lifecycle of a FOIA request?

What is FOIA Public Liaison?

FOIA Public Liaisons are responsible for a few different things, but really focus on solving disputes with how the FOIA is administered with their agency. If you aren't satisfied with the agency's response to your request, you can reach out to the Public Liaison to help you understand the process, help you reduce any further delays, and resolve any disputes.

What are simple requests? Complex? Expedited?

Agencies usually break up the kinds of requests they receive into ones that are simple, complex, and ones that need expedited processing.

Simple requests are those that can be processed relatively quickly because of the small amount of material that has to be processed.

Complex requests are those that will take more time and effort because of the amount of material that has to be reviewed and processed.

Expedited requests are those that, in limited situations, need to be pushed to the front of the line. Agencies define how they choose which requests they will expedite

Why should I know the median processing time?

The median processing time is a good way of gauging how long your request may take. Unlike an average, which includes low and high numbered outliers, the median processing time is the middle number in a long list of numbers. Because of the number of requests that an agency gets, we feel that the median may be a better representation of your expected response time than what the average would be.

Help! - [#263](#)

I'm not sure what's happened to my FOIA request. Who should I talk to?

If the agency or office you've made a request to has given you a point of contact, please reach out to them first. If you're unable to reach them, try the appropriate FOIA Public Liaison. They should be able to help you better understand how the agency or office is handling your request.

What happens if I'm not satisfied with the response I received?

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If the appeal process is complete and you are not yet satisfied, you can also seek mediation services from the FOIA Ombudsman's office, the [Office of Government Information Services](#) at the National Archives and Records Administration.

Can I ask for information about myself? (privacy act)

In most circumstances, asking for information about yourself actually falls under the Privacy Act. This is a different process than the FOIA and is often handled by a completely different office. If you think you're making a Privacy Act request, please check out the appropriate agency's guidelines.

What's Currently On the Site

What is FOIA?

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Your written description must be specific enough that agency FOIA professionals can understand what you are seeking and properly conduct a search. Information such as time periods, specific names, topics, or key words related to the information you are seeking will help inform the agency.

How do I make a FOIA request?

Requests must be submitted in writing, either electronically or in paper format, and should include a reasonable description of the information you are requesting and the format you prefer.

The FOIA does not require agencies to do research for you, analyze data, answer written questions, or create records in response to your request. That means you may need to do some research before filing a request. An agency's own website is a good place to start.

What happens after I make my FOIA request?

A lot happens behind the scenes after an agency receives your FOIA request. Agencies each have their own specific way of processing a request. The first step is to determine which offices may have responsive records and search for those records. Once an office has located records and provided them back to the FOIA shop, the FOIA team may consult subject matter experts, lawyers, or other agency officials to review them for release. This step may also include redacting any non-public information.

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Another option is to agree to a different timetable for processing the request. You can work with the agency's FOIA Public Liaison or other FOIA contacts to discuss this option. You should always feel free to contact the agency to check on the status of your request. Agencies are required to provide an estimated response date upon request.

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similarly, response times vary based on an agency's workload and the complexity of your appeal.

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FOIA Portal Summary

The FOIA Portal collects, on behalf of federal agencies, perfected FOIA requests from the public. The Portal must fulfill the [FOIA Improvement Act of 2016's](#) directive to build a “consolidated online request portal that allows a member of the public to submit a request for records under subsection (a) to any agency from a single website.” The Portal will not replace the existing agency processes and it does not include case management features. The Portal will act as a pass-thru, streamlining and standardizing information provided by the public, ultimately resulting in more consistent FOIA requests.

FOIA requests contain a variety of PII depending on the nature of the request and agency requirements. At a minimum, most requests include name, e-mail address, mailing address, and a description of the records they are seeking. In limited cases, for first-party requests, sensitive PII may be required. Agencies often request this additional information after the initial request has been made, and this practice will continue; in other words, we expect the majority of requests collected through the Portal to be free of sensitive PII. We are surveying [examples of the types of information collected](#) in FOIA requests.

For this first phase of development, the Portal will prioritize the collection and submission of FOIA requests via e-mail. In other words, the Portal will receive information from requesters, pass it on to agencies via e-mail, and then delete it. These types of e-mailed requests are already accepted by nearly every agency, so starting with e-mail replicates an existing process. For agencies with case management systems, we'll be identifying a few initial agency partners to co-develop an HTTPS RESTful API that will allow the Portal to submit requests directly to agency case management systems.

In an effort to help facilitate FOIA requests, the portal will provide a mechanism for agency staff to update contact information for FOIA offices and officers in a central location. In addition to up-to-date agency contact information, agencies will also use this feature to provide details about what information should be included in a FOIA request, and how or where to make the request.

Type	Subject matter	Person(s)	status	Goal
infrequent	VA benefits appeals	?	lots of leads	user feedback
infrequent	immigration lawyer	Rachel Zoglin	calling later today, more leads	user feedback
infrequent	protesters	Harlo, freedom of the press		help finding users, knows major pain points
infrequent	VA benefits appeals	VA Digital service	reached out to a ton of folks, waiting to hear	help finding users
infrequent	USCIS immigration file	USCIS digital service, Eduardo?	LB follow up	help finding users
	labor lawyer	Cori's friend from Iowa	waiting to hear back	
open gov/journo		Matt, Muckrock	interviewed	help finding common infrequent-user types, knows major pain points
open gov/journo		Adam, Reporters Committee for Free	interviewed	help finding common infrequent-user types, knows major pain points
journalism		Jason, BuzzFeed and respondee	waiting til we have more to show	user feedback
open gov		Alex, Sunlight	interviewed	user feedback
university		Alex	scheduled	
university		Susan	scheduled	
university		Linda	scheduled	
PAC		Eric	Leah meeting later this week for leads	
Industry		Nick	Leah meeting next week for leads	

- What requirements or desires do you have in terms of the visual design of the portal?
 - I.e: must retain these colors/fonts, must have these logos...etc.
 - **A:** keep the logo, other than that pretty flexible, liked it at the time but now ready for something new. Not much in the way of requirements. Need to keep black bar at the top that keeps DOJ, DOJ style guide is very old, probably doesn't need to be incorporated
- What does the current look and feel of foia.gov say/mean to you?
 - Looking at the logo up at the top, this is a place that people are coming to interact with their government,
 - Helpful, engaging, non-intimidating, "I could easily figure out how to make a FOIA request"
 - Homepage right now feels very data oriented, but ended up being more educational, especially once
- Is there a sense of "brand loyalty" to foia as an online or in person presence?
 - Maybe just the logo, nothing else really
- How much of [FOIA.gov](https://foia.gov) "branding" are you attached to/want to retain?
- Is there anything else we need to know about the "politics" of this site or the design work that went into it? Anything that people are especially attached to or any other background that we should be aware of?
 - FOIA.gov is going to change, one thing the public still uses it for is the data piece, so while that may get deemphasized, but we don't want to bury it completely or make it look stale
 - Once the annual report is done, there is an annual rollout of the numbers that are on FOIA.gov, so we don't want to bury those (this is future foia.gov redesign work more than portal)
 -
- One thing we do as designers that helps us stay aligned as we move ahead through a project is to create design or experience principles. These should be the guiding light for how we want the user to feel while interacting with our product. These get distilled from our user research, so for example, we heard in testing that the FOIA experience often feels untrustworthy—so an important principle would be to create an environment of trust surrounding the FOIA submission process. Are there other words/phrases that come to mind for you right now that you could share, from your perspective? (Ex: Trustworthy, easy to use...)
- Do you have any familiarity with the US Web Design Standards?
 - We will present more moving forward, how we want to use them as a basis but also do some customization. We can share examples soon to get you thinking,

but also remember that those are just *examples* and what we eventually come to will not look exactly like any of those.

- Talk a little about why we want to use them

Recruiting agencies for feedback

Usability feedback

We are looking for agencies to partner with for building the FOIA national portal. 18F will work closely with partner agencies to determine and build to their needs for the FOIA national platform.

We do not expect this to be a major time commitment, though we need partner agencies to agree to actively evaluate and provide quick turnaround on feedback on our work.

We are approaching your agency specifically because we think that your insights could help us build a product that fits the needs of federal agencies.

Technical feedback

We are writing a (b) (5) for agencies to implement. This API will allow the portal to send FOIA requests directly to your agency's case management system without the need for manual data entry. This API would be built on top of or as a part of your agency's case management system to ingest a FOIA request from the portal.

We're looking for:

- SMEs in IT or software development with knowledge of your FOIA case management system
- 30-60 minutes a week to provide feedback over the next few weeks

We'll ask you to provide feedback on:

- Any web interfaces or wireframes to configure this API
- Initial gut reactions on your level of effort to implement the spec
- Your agency's ability to source a development team (in-house or by contractor)

We are not asking you to build anything, only asking about your *ability* to build in the future.

Description	Group	Required	Nudge	Contextual Info	Validated	Model description
Description of what agency/office does (high-level)		X		Here's where you can tell the public about what your agency or office does. People reading this description will use it to have a clearer understanding of the mission of the office and what kinds of records it processes.		text field (text area)
Public Liaison	Public Liaison					NA
Name	Public Liaison					char field (one line), max_length=128
Email	Public Liaison			to contact the agency or office FOIA public liaison or Request Service Center. Please provide current information for how to reach both.	X	EmailField
Phone	Public Liaison				X	PhoneNumberField
Phone	FOIA Request service center	X			X	PhoneNumberField
Request form URL	Submission		X		X	URLField
Request email	Submission		X		X	JSONField (list)
Address	Submission	X			X	basically we only take one address - Split into (address_lines JSONField (list), street CharField(one line), city CharField(one line), state USPostalCodeField (special field), zip_code CharField(one line))
Fax	Submission		X		X	PhoneNumberField
Agency/office URL	Other	X			X	URLField
Reading room URL	Other		X		X	a list of urls and thier names
Regulations URL	Other		X	Requesters have to follow certain rules or regulations to properly file a FOIA request. To help requesters more easily access those rules and make certain they file a proper request, please provide a link to where those rules are on your website.	X	NA
Commonly requested topics	Other			Requesters will have an easier time determining if your agency is the correct one to file a request with if they know what kinds of records your agency processes. This helps to ensure a request isn't misdirected. Please provide some examples of commonly requested topics here.		JSONField (list)
Commonly misdirected topics	Other			Requesters sometimes misdirect a request because they misunderstand the kinds of records the agency or office processes. Providing this information makes it clear to requesters the kinds of information the agency does not process. Please provide some examples of commonly misdirected topics here.		JSONField (list)
Request instructions	Other		X	Are there any other instructions you make of FOIA requesters not covered above? Please include those or a link to where those exist on your site here.		NA
Are there any agencies that aren't on this list?	Other					NA

The existing foia-legacy.css file should be gradually removed over the course of the project. Suggested strategy:

1. Remove tag rules

There aren't many tag-level rules in the legacy CSS, which means it should be straightforward to remove them and replace them with the WDS.

2. Style shared elements

The styles for shared elements should all come from the USWDS. There are a number of elements that are shared between pages, including:

- Buttons
- Header
- Footer
- Form fields

The most intricate of these tasks is replacing the buttons, because there is an image for every button on the site. However, most of these images are declared in the CSS, not in the HTML markup, which will make removing and replacing them much easier.

The header and footer should be governed by new code to allow for gradual implementation of new design. This will ensure consistency across all pages.

There are only two form fields in the current site, both of which are currently styled (with differing styles) by IDs.

3. If necessary, isolate remaining ID selectors

Some of the existing legacy CSS may need to continue to exist if we do not have time to restyle the entire site (which we likely won't). At this point, we should have been able to remove all of the shared CSS, so the only thing that will remain is page-specific legacy code. In this case, the foia-legacy.css file should be split into files that describe the pages they belong to and only included on those legacy files.

FOIA Project User Stories

The format of these user stories is: As a [human], in order to [accomplish a goal], I need to [be able to do a thing]. They are identified in letter order because they are not ranked within their priority category.

High priority{

- A. As an agency, in order to keep up with demand fulfilling requests and avoid unnecessary work, the requests that I receive are...
 - a. for records that my agency has
 - b. well scoped to what the requester really wants (and perfected?)
 - c. contain all the information required to fulfill the request in the law or my agency's regulations
 - d. not for records that already exist publicly (for example, on an agency website, usa.gov, data.gov, a FOIA reading room, etc.)
- B. As a requester, in order to easily submit a request...
 - a. I can go to one website to submit a FOIA request
 - b. my request goes to the right agency
 - c. my request is well scoped to what I want (and perfected?)
 - d. I realize before submitting my request if my information is already publicly available (for example, on an agency website, usa.gov, data.gov, a FOIA reading room, etc.)
- C. As an agency, in order to accept/track/fulfill FOIA requests received via one central FOIA website, I can manage requests in a way that isn't a significant burden (i.e., is interoperable with or improves my existing process).

Medium priority

- D. As a researcher, in order to find government information, I can search all existing publicly available government documents (for example, on an agency website, usa.gov, data.gov, a FOIA reading room, etc.)

Necessary, meta stories

- E. As OMB, in order to help make sure agencies accept/track/fulfill FOIA requests received via one central FOIA website, I know what interoperability standards to issue.
- F. As DOJ OCIO, in order to build and maintain one central FOIA website, I have the necessary groomed backlog of user stories, technical specifications, designs, sustainment plan, staff, and budget to get started.
- G. *As a requester, in order to stay within my budget, I can request a waiver or indicate the max I'm willing to pay when submitting my request. Note: This was cut because it falls under statutorily required information: there's A. info that is required to *submit* or start a*

request, B. info that is legally required for an agency to work on/fulfill a request (either in the FOIA or the agency's regs), and C. information that makes a request easily fulfillable. We obviously would need to require A, and then research how to best solicit B and C.

Low priority

- H. As a requester, in order to not feel ignored/get frustrated/want to sue, I can...
 - a. Track the status of my request,
 - b. Easily get in touch, or
 - c. Get my request fulfilled in a shorter amount of time (Note: this is more related to the requester's UX, but this bullet can get into standing)
- I. As an agency, in order to provide requesters with status tracking, I can update the status of a request in a way that isn't a significant burden (for example, is interoperable with or improves my existing process).

(b) (5)



(b) (5)



Declare Assumptions

[OASIS Assumptions worksheet example](#)

The process of declaring assumptions ensures that we explicitly address all the things about the problem and users that we believe to be true. This is how we make sure that we test everything from the very unknown to the most fundamental assumptions about the thing we're building.

This is a team exercise. Everyone gets an opportunity to voice their opinion about the best way to solve a problem. Declaring assumptions reveals the divergence of opinions and exposes a broad set of possible solutions.

Assumptions Worksheet

This is a helper to get the team to think about the different areas of the business/problem/solution space that you may have assumptions about.

Business Assumptions

1. I believe my customers have a need to:
 - Pro: need more transparency into the FOIA process.
 - Non-pro: be able to a FOIA request successfully.
2. I believe these needs can be solved with:
 - Pro: providing a tracker for the FOIA process and a reading room for all of government.
 - Non-pro: an easy to use website for submitting FOIA requests.
3. I believe my initial customers are (or will be):
 - Pro users
 - Non-pro users
4. I believe the #1 value a customer wants to get out of my service is:
 - Pro: having a FOIA response to their question and having insight into the process during it.
 - Non-pro: having a FOIA response to their question.
5. I believe The customer can also get these additional benefits:
 - Pro: the ability to hold organizations accountable for their requests.
 - Non-pro: they can learn more about the workings of government.
6. I believe I will acquire the majority of my customers through:
 - Pro: the ability to hold organizations accountable for their requests.
 - Non-pro: they can learn more about the workings of government.
7. I believe my biggest product risk is:
 - Bureaucratic push-back. Old systems. Professionals need assumption being incorrect or insufficient. An ineffective UX for non-pro's.
8. We will solve this through:
 - Bureaucratic push-back: Buy in through engaging the FOIA task force.

- Old systems: Buy-in from federal agency IT+FOIA teams.
 - Pro's need assumption incorrect: engaging pro's through dev process.
 - An ineffective UX for non-pro's engaging non-pro's through design process.
9. What other assumptions do we have that, if proven false, will cause our project to fail?
-

User Assumptions

1. Who is the user?
 -
2. What problems does our product solve?
 -
3. When and how is our product used?
 -
4. What features are important?
 -
5. How should our product look and behave?
 -

To flesh out your assumptions, it may also be helpful to spend a session with the team creating a list of outcomes you want to create, and the features that might help achieve those outcomes.

Hypothesis

Format:

We believe that: **[creating this capability/feature]**

For **[these people/personas]**

Will result in: **[this outcome]**

We will know we are right when: **[we see this measurable signal]**

####

We believe that building a better experience around identifying agencies for non-pro users submit requests to the correct agency.

This will result in requests being sent to the correct agency.

We will know we are right when we see data indicating that requests from the new FOIA.gov are properly directed more often than requests submitted via other channels.

##

How do we build a better experience around identifying agencies?

We believe that providing users with better contextual information around an agency before they submit a request will result in users being better equipped to ensure that they are submitting their request to the appropriate destination.

####

We believe that providing that creating a way for users to determine the destination of their request through the subject matter or content of their request will result in better directed FOIA requests.

[Insert your agency and office here]

Type an "x" in the box that meets your agency's requirements. Please use the additional

[Insert your agency and office here] FOIA requirements

Field	required	optional	Conditional
Requester's first and last name			
Requester's middle name			
Requester's organization			
Requester's email address			
Requester's phone number			
Requester's fax number			
Requester's mailing address			
Requester category such individual (non commercial), representative of the news media, educational, or commercial requester			
Request description			
An option to request a fee waiver			
An option to request expedited processing			
Electronic signature or captcha			
Attachments or supporting documentation			
Social security number			
Does your agency require requesters to certify or verify their identities when making FOIA requests?			
Does your agency require the form DOJ-361?			
Case number			
Date of birth			
Alien number			

Search

Problem Definition

Requesters initiate a FOIA request for documents that have already been released publicly because they are unaware that those documents are already available.

Goals

1. Reduce the number of requests agencies receive for information that is already public.

Not Just Responsive Documents

We're thinking in terms of searching through responsive documents. However worth thinking about is what else can be integrated into the search - especially as the goal is to reduce the number of FOIA requests. For example, should we integrate with a data.gov search? What other easily integratable sources will help make it easier for the public to find the data or information they want?

Action Items

1. Go through our list of reading rooms, asking the following questions:
 - a. How much data is in the reading room?
 - b. Is structured data provided?
 - c. How easy would it to be to scrape?
 - d. How valuable appears to be the data in the reading room?
2. Talk to the USA Search/Digital Gov team again about what they can do for us. Specifically if we give them a feed of reading room links, can they crawl that for us? I anticipate meeting with them for an hour, and then quickly determining whether we should work with them further, or roll our own crawlers and search infrastructure.
3. Kick off a discovery process that aims to understand what users need from a FOIA specific search. What are they searching for? What do they expect the results to return? How do they search?

Colophon

This document came out of a Tech Team discussion about FOIA search. The meeting ended up coming up with a few ways to move forward, which I want to summarize here for further discussion.

Bi-Weekly GSA FOIA Meeting

Travis Lewis, GSA

The Request Process

GSA & FOIA Online

R: How do we approach FOIA online?

J: How do route requests now?

How does FOIA requests get assigned?

Roles & what they are for

Chief FOIA Officer

Public Liaison

FOIA Requester Service Center

Program manager & Phone number

Misc

General questions / information / executive correspondences

GSA separates Privacy act requests to the Chief Privacy Act Officer

The Request Process

GSA & FOIA Online

FOIA Online - Renews yearly

We started in Juut we will probably start

Estimated cost of FOIA Online:

- \$160k start up
- \$100k per year to renew
- 2000 request per year
- Each agency pays by percentage -- we are about 3 to 4%, so that is what we are paying.
- The most that pay to play, the cheaper the price for everyone.

R: How do we approach FOIA online?

- We need to figure out how to hook into their systems to work together.

J: How do route requests -- using FOIA Online?

- Request
 - Electronically
 - Requestor gets to FOIA Online directly
 - User can create an acct or submit as a guest
 - guest because some are distrusting of creating information
 - Portal will prompt them for relevant data
 - Name, address, company, etc.

- Custom GSA section
 - Is there a particular region of the country?
 - Is there a contract, etc...
 - Fields are here: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103778>
- Submit
- Before FOIA online, it goes to a shared google inbox
 - Then someone would pick it up and manually enter
- FOIA Online it will log into the system -- this saves on data entry time and effort
- ~50 or so come in a week
 - ~40 are electronic
- In the office
 - 9 staff on staff that central foia analysts
 - each person has an assigned program
 - public buildings
 - federal acquisitions
 - regions
 - CIO/CFO
 - List of programs:
 -

Organization	Directory	PBS
Office of the Administrator		
FAS	- Federal Acquisition Service	
PBS	- Public Buildings Service	
CAO	- Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer	
CBCA	- Civilian Board of Contract Appeals	
CFO	- Office of the Chief Financial Officer	
CIA	- Congressional & Intergovernmental Affairs	
CIO	- Office of the Chief Information Officer	
OAS	- Office of Administrative Services	
OCM	- Office of Communications and Marketing	
OCR	- Office of Civil Rights	
OCSIT	- Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies	
OGC	- Office of General Counsel	
OGP	- Office of Government-wide Policy	
OHRM	- Office of Human Resources Management	
OIG	- Office of Inspector General	
OMA	- Office of Mission Assurance	
OSBU	- Office of Small Business Utilization	
GSA Regions		
Office of the Inspector General (website)		

- This is from insite.gsa.gov menu bar.
- Region division:
 - <https://insite.gsa.gov/portal/category/529792>
 - Regional divisions can be similar or same as other agencies
 - FEMA: Possibly the same: <http://www.fema.gov/regional-operations>
 - DOI: Slightly different: <http://www.doi.gov/pmb/oepc/reo.cfm>

- There is an analyst or two on each program, some have multiple program
- What if a foia request falls under two programs?
 - Possible solutions
 - Work as one FOIA request in concurrence
 - OR you can reach out to the requester to split it into two request
 - One takes one week, while the other might take 6 months
 - This is usually preferred by submitter
 - Sometimes, it can cover 4 or 5 programs
- Request splitting
 - FOIA Online has the ability to duplicate and create a new number.
 - The text / data doesn't change, but the routing does.

How does FOIA requests get assigned?

- National Team (Travis' team) assigns to one of many Coordinators
- Coordinators assigns to SME
- When each assignment happens, an email is issued

You can either be a centralized or decentralized office -- FOIA Online allows for this flexibility. GSA used to be decentralized, but now they are centralized.

- SME is at the task level. They find what
 - They provide redacted or unredacted version in the system.
 - SME provides the base for the FOIA response.
 - Then the National Team handles the rest.
 - They send a message thru FOIA Online, which triggers email -- hey it's done!

*** STOPPED HERE FOR TIME REASONS***

Roles & what they are for

Chief FOIA Officer

- This person is accountable for FOIA law
- In many agencies this is the Deputy Administrator

Public Liaison

- Is more of a neutral role that someone can call
- So, GSA Public Liaison would work w/ Travis, The Program Manager, to find the information.

FOIA Requester Service Center

- People to call about a status of a request
- People to call to clarification
- Sometimes we get first time FOIA requests calling

Program manager & Phone number

- GSA has this -- it is Travis + phone
- Why is this there?
 - Because the service center is a call box
 - More experienced FOIA requestors will call Travis directly
- Maybe we should get rid of one number or the other and if someone wants to get a hold of Travis, then they have his number through his email signature?

Misc

General questions / information / executive correspondences

(b) (5)



GSA separates Privacy act requests and routes them to the Chief Privacy Act Officer

(b) (5)



FOIA.gov - current functionality

Audiences

- Anonymous users
- FOIA personnel
- Developer

Data preparation/input

Annual report (to be done for each of 117 agencies/departments - once per year)

<https://www.foia.gov/data.html>

1. FOIA personnel manually inputs data into a customized Excel spreadsheet (<https://www.foia.gov/developer.html> contains a link to "Download IEPD"), which uses Virtual Basic macros to allow FOIA personnel to:
 - a. Export to human-readable Word document
 - b. Import (resume work) from an XML file
 - c. Export to XML
 - d. Clear all entries
 - e. Copy/paste from one cell to another (all clipboard functionality is disabled)
2. OIP collects all of these spreadsheets, and reviews them, then exports as XML file using the above-mentioned macro functionality. NOTE: The schema of the XML generated is designed to follow these guidelines: <https://www.niem.gov>
3. OIP gives developer XML files - via the JEFS (box.com) system
4. Developer imports XML files into MySQL database on development server
5. OIP reviews user-facing site on development server
6. Developer copies data into production server

Quarterly report (to be done for each of 117 agencies/departments, 4x per year)

<https://www.foia.gov/glance.html>

1. FOIA personnel uses XML generator app (PHP-based) at <https://www.foia.gov/xmlgen> which generates a .zip file that contains a .json and .xml file. The .json file can be used to resume progress later, by importing it at the above URL.
2. FOIA personnel uploads .zip file to a publicly accessible URL on their web servers.
3. Foia.gov has a scheduled task (cron job) that runs each day at 10:30am and collects all of these .zip files and does virus scanning of .zip file.
4. At 2:30pm another cron job writes any changed data to the MySQL database on [foia.gov](https://www.foia.gov).

Contact information for FOIA offices

<https://www.foia.gov/report-makerequest.html>

1. OIP maintains in an Excel spreadsheet and periodically sends major updates to developer
2. Developer imports spreadsheet into MySQL database
3. Also, OIP can do minor updates (editing single rows) in a PHP-based app (CakePHP) at <http://webadmin-ext.doj.gov/iso/ewsdB/FoiaComponent>

Technologies for user-facing site

- HTML/CSS/Javascript
- Java/Tomcat back-end (accessed through AJAX calls)

Version control

- All HTML/CSS/Javascript, Java, and the <https://www.foia.gov/xmlgen> PHP code is maintained in a (private) Github repository: <https://github.com/usdoj/USDofFoia>

Index of FOIA Research Artifacts

User Research

To understand the FOIA request and fulfillment process, we interviewed 3 professional FOIA requesters and 3 FOIA processors from different components within the Department of Justice.

[FOIA Requester Interview Plan](#)

FOIA Requester Interview Notes & Synthesis:

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A large black rectangular redaction box covering the content of the FOIA Requester Interview Notes & Synthesis.

[FOIA Processor Interview Plan](#)

Department of Justice FOIA Processor Interview Notes & Synthesis:

[Bureau of Prisons](#)

[Criminal Records](#)

[Office of Information Policy](#)

[FOIA Requester Journey Map](#)

[FOIA Processor Journey Map](#)

[FOIA Requester & Processor Personas](#)

To test our concept of developing a searchable repository of responsive FOIA records, we interviewed 3 professional FOIA requesters and asked them to tell us about their research process and react to our prototype.

[Krang Interview Script](#)

[Krang Invision Prototype](#)

Krang Interview Notes & Synthesis:

(b) (6)

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the content of the Krang Interview Notes & Synthesis.

(b) (6)

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the top portion of the page, starting below the (b) (6) label and extending across the width of the content area.

In preparation for collecting and hosting agencies' FOIA records, we are researching strategies for document intake. This research will include interviews with FOIA officers, design research, and technical research.

[Krang Document Intake Research Plan](#)

Design Studios

To kick off design for our document search platform, we conducted a design studio with our internal team and a FOIA processor.

[Krang Design Studio Plan](#)

[Results](#)

To inform design of a page displaying FOIA records for a particular agency, we conducted a design studio with our internal team and a FOIA processor.

[Agency Library Page Design Studio Plan](#)

[Results](#)

Krang Document Intake Research Plan

Overview:

In previous research, we heard that FOIA reading rooms are often bottlenecks to releasing responsive records online. Current reading rooms are often built in HTML or other formats that are not user-friendly. Uploading documents requires technical knowledge that many FOIA officers do not possess, and agencies don't have resources to hire technical staff dedicated to FOIA work. Since FOIA reading rooms aren't easy to maintain, they often contain a very limited collection of documents that are difficult to sort through and irrelevant to FOIA requesters.

The purpose of this research is to understand how FOIA officers currently upload documents, learn how to lower the barriers, and discover whether agencies would release more documents if the barriers were reduced. In addition, in anticipation of the White House creating a policy plan to encourage agencies to release more information, we would like to learn what resources we can provide to best help agencies adapt to the new policy and release records through Krang.

This research will inform the design of the Krang document upload system and agency libraries and inform how we will collaborate with agencies to implement and test this system. Our current product is designed to work for the best use case - a large repository of documents with full metadata. By partnering with an actual agency, we will learn to adapt Krang to an agency's actual set of documents and learn what tools we need to develop to clean up documents in the future. Ultimately, we hope to create a product that will be adopted by multiple agencies and deprecate the need for FOIA Online's frontend.

Research goals:

We want to understand how agencies currently archive FOIA correspondence and records, how they handle document upload, and what barriers - including technical impediments, policies, and attitudes - prevent agencies from releasing more documents online. Ultimately, we want to understand how Krang can better provide for those needs and what functions would make Krang worthwhile for agencies to adopt.

- How do agencies archive FOIA correspondence and records, and how can we get them?
- How do agencies currently upload documents to their reading rooms? What are the differences between how agencies do this?
- If agencies are currently releasing few or no responsive records online, what barriers prevent them from doing so? What are the agency's policies and attitudes around releasing records publicly?

- What problems are FOIA officers facing, or what goals are they focused on achieving, that Krang can help address? What functions would make Krang worthwhile to agencies? What incentives can we provide to make agencies interested in adopting Krang?
- What document intake solutions are agencies open to? Would it be better to have agencies email documents to us, or to create an interface for them to upload documents to? Would it be better to create a .gov scraper, which would not require agency participation but would prevent us from being the original platform for document release and replacing outdated reading rooms? Would agencies give us an API to work with?

We also want to understand aspects of the FOIA response process that affect how Krang will work.

- What are agencies' documents like? Do they have OCR? Metadata? Do they need to be cleaned up?
- How are paper-based communications currently archived? How can we work with (obtain documents from) agencies that primarily have non-first-person requests that are mostly paper-based?
- What are agencies' needs around removing documents? What should our document removal process be?

Research components:

- We will conduct design research around existing document intake solutions
- We will conduct technical research to understand what an ideal record is (i.e. what metadata the document should have / text based layer as PDF) and compare documents from different agencies to see what state they are in.
- We will conduct in-person interviews with stakeholders at 2-3 agencies
 - **CFPB**
We want to talk to stakeholders at CFPB who want to work with us and are vetting documents to be released. CFPB is a young agency, so we assume the number of /documents they have will be relatively limited. We will start by talking to Marty, the chief FOIA officer, and see if there are other stakeholders we need to talk to. We want to understand their document workflow and how Krang can intervene/help in that process in a way that isn't a burden for FOIA processors.

- **GSA**
Uses FOIA Online, medium number of requests
- **SBA**
We'd like to talk to processors from a smaller agency, with a medium amount of requests
- **Department of Interior**
Receive lots of requests, decentralized, work with their own system rather than FOIAOnline or another system
- **DHS/DOJ/DOD etc**
We'd like to talk to another agency that has a very high volume of requests
- **OSTP**
Maybe talk to OSTP because they currently have a rudimentary reading room and a low volume of FOIA requests - probably in the 100s range.

Interview structure:

- Have processors describe / demonstrate the document release and upload process
- Discuss current document handling and needs / opportunities
- Co-design with officers around document intake

Interview (1 hour):

Intros (10 min)

Understanding your current records release process (10 min)

- What volume of FOIA requests do you get in a week/month/year?
- I want to focus on the part of the FOIA process where you are actually releasing documents to a requester. So after you have located records relating to a FOIA request and have decided what to release, what do you do? Can you walk me through the last one you did?
 - How did you send the records to the requester? Is that typical?
 - What file formats are your records in? What format do you send responsive records in? What mode do you send records in?
 - Do you have requests and records that are non-electronic?

- How did you archive the records? How did you archive the correspondence? What tools did you use for recordkeeping? What information did you store? Is that typical? (In other words, what information is in your FOIA log, and how do you maintain it?)

Publicly Releasing Records (15 min)

- Did you make that record or request publicly accessible? Why or why not? If yes, can you walk me through the process of posting it?
- Can you walk me through an example of posting a record online?
 - Did you use an independent online FOIA library or reading room, or use a system like FOIA Online?
 - What did you have to do when you uploaded the document? Were there any problems? Is that typical?
- How do you decide what to publish? Can you describe what type of records you currently publish online? FOIA logs? Proactively released records? Responsive records?
- What percentage of FOIA responses does your agency publicly release?
- Would you like to release more? Why or why not? Would you ever release all responsive records from your agency publicly? What are the barriers? What type of documents would you like to publish vs. keep private?
- Is your organization willing to publish original requests in association with the records that are released by them?
- *For CFPB: Can you tell us more about what records you'd like to publish through openFOIA? What do you hope to achieve publishing documents through openFOIA? How is this different from your current practices of publishing records? What are your metrics for success?*

Thinking about the future of this process (20 min)

- Now that we understand more about your process of releasing records to the public, we'd like to do an exercise together to think about where and how we can improve that process. We've taken some notes from our conversation on the tasks you described and the tools you currently use. Let's fill in some of the holes in this grid and think about how this process could have gone differently.

TASK

TRIGGER

MOTIVE

PAIN POINT?

EXISTING TOOL VS. KRANG

- Imagine a magical robot that could eliminate all the hard and tedious things. What would it do?
- What if...you upload the documents to krang and we are the delivery mechanism to the requester
- What if...cc Krang

- If you were going to publish more records online, would there be value to you in using a consolidated system for all federal agencies? Or would you rather maintain your own independent reading room? Why?
- What would make publishing records on this system worthwhile/appealing for your agency?
- Would you be willing to participate in a pilot of this tool? What would it take to get you to use an alternate system for 2 weeks? How about you send us your documents for 2 weeks, and we document how much work it took?

Survey about document format and technical requirements:

What file formats are your records in (Outlook, Word, Excel, paper)? What format do you send responsive records in (PDF, original formats). What mode do you send records in (digital, CD-ROM, flash drive, paper).

- Do you have requests and records that are non-electronic? How do you archive those documents?
- Do your records have OCR? Are digital records ever printed then rescanned? If so, is this when OCR occurs? Do you verify the quality of the OCR? What metadata is included?
- Is 508 a barrier to publishing records online? What exactly are the issues?
- Do you ever need to remove documents that are published online? Why? How do you do that?

List of "Universal" Data Fields for FOIA Request Submission			
Data Field	Most Common Type of Field	Usually Required or Optional	Notes
<u>Prefix/Title</u>	Dropdown Selection	Optional	Usually populated with: Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, Miss
<u>First Name</u>	Text	Required	N/A
<u>Middle Initial / Middle Name</u>	Text	Optional - Frequently becomes required for First Party Requests	Some agencies ask for initial and some for name
<u>Last Name</u>	Text	Required	N/A
<u>Suffix</u>	Dropdown Selection	Optional	Usually populated with: Esq, MD, PHD, Jr, Sr, I, II, III, IV
<u>Company / Organization</u>	Text	Optional	Usually referring to an affiliation the requester would like to note, i.e., Law Firm, Media Outlet, or Civil Society Group
<u>Email Address</u>	Text	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Sometimes required, sometimes optional, and sometimes conditional
<u>Phone Number</u>	Numeric Text	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Do we want a standardized format, i.e., (111)-111-1111
<u>Fax Number</u>	Numeric Text	Optional	Do we want a standardized format, i.e., (111)-111-1111
<u>Mailing Address Line 1</u>	Text	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Sometimes required, sometimes optional, and sometimes conditional
<u>Mailing Address Line 2</u>	Text	Optional	N/A
<u>City</u>	Text	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Sometimes required, sometimes optional, and sometimes conditional
<u>Country</u>	Dropdown Selection	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Sometimes required, sometimes optional, and sometimes conditional
<u>State/Province</u>	Dropdown Selection	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Dependent on "Country" selection
<u>Zip/Postal Code</u>	Text	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Sometimes required, sometimes optional, and sometimes conditional
<u>Processing Fees</u>	Numeric Text	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Some agency regulations require the requester to identify how much they are willing to pay, others are silent **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Delivery Method</u>	Dropdown Selection	Varies greatly by Agency Regulations	Usually populated with: Paper or Electronic **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Requester Category</u>	Dropdown Selection	Optional	Options include: individual (non commercial), representative of the news media, educational, commercial requester **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Request Description</u>	Text	Required	Need to consider character limits **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Request Fee Waiver</u>	Dropdown Selection - Followed by Text box for Request	Required	Usually "yes" or "no" dropdown selection box, which is followed by a text box for request if yes is selected **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Request Expedited Processing</u>	Dropdown Selection - Followed by Text box for Request	Required	Usually "yes" or "no" dropdown selection box, which is followed by a text box for request if yes is selected **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Attachments / Supporting Documentation</u>	File Selection Button	Optional	This is important because it allows for submission of required documentation such as a Cert of ID that is necessary to make a first party "perfected" request - need to identify file types supported - **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**
<u>Electronic Signature / Non SPAM Verification</u>	Varies	Required	Some type of Captcha/signature/or other verification mechanism **Needs Explanation to Educate the Requester**

National FOIA Portal: Agency Onboarding for receiving FOIA Requests

National FOIA Portal Backend

Overview	1
Setup	2
Email	2
API	3
Agency Onboarding	3

Overview

At current, FOIA requests submitted through the National FOIA Portal can be forwarded to agencies via email or API. Each email will contain a table of which the contents comprise a single FOIA request. FOIA requests sent to agencies via API are in the form of an http request containing a JSON payload. Both methods support attachments that may have been uploaded by the requester with their request. The system provides the capability for individual components within a single agency to vary in their methods of receipt.

Setup

For both email and API methods of receiving FOIA requests, the setup within the portal starts as follows:

1. Visit the edit page for the agency component.
2. Scroll down to the “Portal Submission Options” field group.
3. Select “Email” to receive requests via email or “API” to receive requests via API.

Note: See the “Agency Onboarding” section under API for more detail on agency onboarding for the API.

PORTAL SUBMISSION OPTIONS *

Portal Submission Format *

☒ Email
☐ API means by which the Portal should submit requests to the Agency Component.

▼ EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

Submission Email

▼ API SUBMISSIONS

Submission API URL

This must be an external URL such as *http://example.com*.

Submission API Shared Secret

Provide a shared secret key which will be included in the headers with requests sent to your Component by the Portal as a means of verifying the request originates from the Portal.

Email

If “Email” was selected to receive requests, enter the email address that should receive FOIA requests in the “Submission Email” field.

PORTAL SUBMISSION OPTIONS *

Portal Submission Format *

Email ▾

Select the means by which the Portal should submit requests to the Agency Component.

▼ EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

Submission Email

▼ API SUBMISSIONS

Submission API URL

This must be an external URL such as <http://example.com>.

Submission API Shared Secret

Provide a shared secret key which will be included in the headers with requests sent to your Component by the Portal as a means of verifying the request originates from the Portal.

API

If “API” was selected to receive requests, enter the receiving endpoint URL in the “Submission API URL” field. Additionally, enter a secret key in the “Submission API Shared Secret” field. The secret key will be included in the headers with requests sent via API to provide a means by which the receiving agency can verify the request actually originates from the portal.

PORTAL SUBMISSION OPTIONS *

Portal Submission Format *

API ▾

Select the means by which the Portal should submit requests to the Agency Component.

▼ EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

Submission Email

▼ API SUBMISSIONS

Submission API URL

This must be an external URL such as <http://example.com>.

Submission API Shared Secret

Provide a shared secret key which will be included in the headers with requests sent to your Component by the Portal as a means of verifying the request originates from the Portal.

Agency Onboarding

A number of steps are involved for both the DOJ and a receiving agency in terms of API integration. At a high level, the process is as follows:

1. Agency lets DOJ know that at least one of its components would like to receive FOIA requests via API
2. DOJ explains this process to the agency

3. DOJ sends agency a link to the API specification
(<https://www.foia.gov/developer/agency-api/>)
4. Agency implements code that conforms to the API
5. Agency provides endpoint URL and secret key to DOJ
6. DOJ follows the aforementioned API setup steps in the staging environment (backstage)
for an agency component within the agency
7. DOJ/Agency test using the staging environment
8. Agency makes adjustments to code if any are necessary as a result of testing
9. Steps 7 and 8 are repeated as necessary
10. When ready, the designated agency manager from the agency adjusts the relevant
agency components in production to switch over to API

FOIA Research Plan

User groups

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Journey Map

Journey map should be produced as an exploration betwe

Interviews

Groups

Usability Testing

Test Scenario 1

Test Scenario 2

Risks

The purpose of this document is to document risks that members of the team have identified. They may not be validated, however they may be helpful to have captured.

- DOJ security requires email encryption
- Sending files via email attachment = security concern
- FOIAOnline/other platforms negotiate a redirect over email submission (i.e. no submission via portal)
- Time
- If survey doesn't capture all request requirements, we're in a bad place.

Subject	Organization/Role	User type	Date	Research format	Documentation	Main observations that you remember	Who did the test/interview, etc (FOIA team member name)	
Individual name or Group. If group, how many people			roughly "early June 2014" is fine	focus group? individual interview? set script, open ended discussion? usability test? watching them use a competitors product? contextual inquiry (which just means watching them work in their own environment)	handwritten notes? affinity map? recording? none? can you provide them? Upload to this folder as well or point to them?			
(b)	Reporter, Nebraska Times	Pro Requestor	7/1/2014	coffee for half an hour, just a casual discussion	notes	has own system he's used for years, just hates not knowing what's already out there	Jane Doe	
???, 2	Department of Interior	Gov	6/18/2014	Open ended discussion at DOI offices	handwritten notes	Happy with existing custom internal system. "508 is a struggle". 508 is a major bottleneck, as it redaction. Thousands of possible FOIA destinations (e.g. every national park)]		
???	USCIS	Gov	6/18/2014	Open ended conversation	handwritten notes	99/9% of requests are privacy act. Documents scanned in as "GIF". Verification of D is important for their users. Electronic delivery includes file encryption, many requesters have problems decrypting.		
???, 3	DOJ	Gov	6/20/2014	Open ended conversation	handwritten notes	Need to help requesters get to the right place. FOIA report data is a priority. Need tech to search all FOIA docs		
???, 1	Department of Defense, FOIA Officer	Gov	6/23/2014	Open ended discussion at DOD offices	handwritten notes	Happy with FOIAExpress. Lots of problems with directing requests to the correct place. Current reading room is very time consuming to update	VZ, RM, EM, JK?	
???, 1	Muckrock, Principal	Pro Requestor, Creator of FOIA request+tracking platform	6/30/2014	Open ended discussion via remote video	handwritten notes	FOIA requests process should be standardized but rarely is. Process is arbitrary. Muckrock users: Journalists, researchers, academics, think tanks, commercial, history buffs, activists. 30-40% responses are via paper. Some agencies (Treasury) require physically signed forms.	VZ, EM	
???	Open the Government, Center for Effective Government, National Security Archive	Pro requester	7/3/2014	Open ended discussion	handwritten notes	Googling FOIA is faster than using existing sites to find contact info+responsive docs. Existing FOIA data (foia.gov) is not usable or good, can't compare across agencies, not user friendly or good for advanced users. Emphasized a desire to see timelines. Public disclosure of documents should be opt-in. 508 is a problem with responsive documents. FOIA Public liaisons can be a major asset. Would like to be able to track referrals & consultations, trackers should be interoperable with existing FOIA platforms. Dashboard view to see compliance with platform could be useful (carrot).		
???, ~4	Sunlight Foundation	Pro requester	7/3/2014	Open ended discussion	handwritten notes	Tracking the FOIA process would be very helpful, create increasing accountability. The state of FOIA is "worse now that it has ever been." A transparency leaderboard with data like average response time would be very helpful. Little to no expectation setting is done. Sample letters would be useful.		
Tim ??? and team, 5	EPA/FOIAOnline	Gov	7/7/2014	Open ended discussion at EPA	handwritten notes	A backend gov view for FOIA processing could be valuable. Government FOIA-side culture needs to be nurtured. Internal process relies on loss of institutional knowledge.		
(b) (6)	National Security Archive, FOIA Lead	Pro requester	7/8/2014	Open ended discussion	handwritten notes	Appeals process is inconsistent. Attaching files is essential. Most online platforms don't provide adequate options for document attachment.		
???, 3	White House Office of Science & Technology Policy	Gov	7/25/2014	Open ended discussion	handwritten notes	Current redaction software is not good.	VZ, RM, EM, JK	

Subject	Organization/Role	User type	Date	Research format	Documentation	Main observations that you remember	Who did the test/interview, etc (FOIA team member name)	
(b) [REDACTED]	Former Journalist	Non-pro requester, journo	12/10/2014	Scenarios walk through	electronic notes	Provided with FOIA scenario, relied largely on existing journo+FOIA communities/listservs. Wanted file attachment for request description, more explanation for expediting (what/who qualifies?). Tracking number would be very useful, ability to see what step/state request is in.	VZ, JK	
Lyndsay	18F	Lay requester	10/23/2014	Open ended discussion	electronic notes	Certified mail is preferred request medium, FOIA liason may be only person requester can speak to, guidance should be provided by non-government parties (trust is an issue), successfully finds FOIA contacts through Google	VZ, JL	

Day	Overall milestones	Interoperability	Status	Requesting/Submit	Statistics	Outreach		
W		finish first draft spec for discussion w/ agencies	building prototypes/writing scripts	building prototypes/writing scripts		email first round re: research		
Th	have tests scheduled	email 4-6 agencies about spec				email all agencies re: research		
F	flesh out outline		testing	testing				
M	start writing	meet with agencies about spec	testing	testing	(ask agencies about this too)			
T		meet with agencies about spec	testing	testing	(ask agencies about this too)			
W		iterate on spec						
Th		email spec to agencies who signed up w/ DOJ			email spec to advocates with what we're thinking for status collection stats			
F	Outline & draft of deliverable done	iterate on spec						
□								
M	Writing/refining							
T	→ □							
W	Practice and prep							
Th	Present							
F	→ □							
	Also prototype planning:							
	(b) (5)							

Day							
W							
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	Mon	Fri	Current plan	Old plan		Victor to do
Week 1	4/24					
Week 2	5/1			<i>kick off</i>		
Week 3	5/8	5/12		<i>Build journey map, gather feedback in interviews, start sketching research plan to set up interviews,</i>	finalize requests for agency email blast (what systems are you using for: intake, management, and reading room; what size is your reading room; how do you collect sensitive info from the public),	Write research plan and interview outlines
Week 4	5/15	5/19		<i>Refine journey map in interviews, share broadly, finish synthesis</i>	Monday: send request to agencies for answer by Friday; Ask (b) about more meetings w/ OGE, roll your own, and small guy folks	Write research plan & interview questions; lead interviews
Week 5	5/22	5/26	interviews, synthesis, hypotheses	<i>Sketches/design studio for prototypes, FOIAOnline week, finish draft standards, start building prototypes</i>		finish synthesis and lead design studios
Week 6	5/29	6/2	sketches/design studio, prototyping	<i>Testing front end prototype with users and iterating</i>	Acquia and Laura Ponce start	lead ux testing; out Wed - Fri
Week 7	6/5	6/9	testing and iterating	<i>Continue to iterate and test prototypes.</i>		lead ux testing; work remotely
Week 8	6/12	6/16	testing and iterating	<i>testing and iterating</i>	Have something that gets a request to 1 of each of the major categories of agencies can ingest (or says will work), have something that we can accept docs from 1 of each major categories of agencies	Victor out Mon - Wed?
Week 9	6/19	6/23	finish deliverables/gather feedback	<i>Finish deliverables</i>	Work out kinks and write up	
Week 10	6/26	6/30	incorporate feedback, travel to DC for final ship	<i>Gather/synthesize feedback, iterate</i>	Gather/synthesize feedback, iterate	
Week 11	7/3	7/7		<i>Ship/cushion</i>	Ship/cushion	
						Journey map, understand full FOIA proc
						User stories for changing the process
						Are they valid? Iterate.
						Final user stories,
						Design studio sketching
						build and iterate?

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Type (frequent requester, infrequent, or agency)	Subject matter	Goal	Person(s)		
infrequent requester	VA benefits appeals	user feedback	?		
infrequent requester	USCIS immigration file	user feedback	?		
infrequent requester	protesters	help finding users, knows major pain points	(b) freedom of the press		
infrequent requester	VA benefits appeals	help finding users	VA Digital service		
infrequent requester	USCIS immigration file	help finding users	USCIS digital service, Eduardo?		
infrequent requester	?	help finding common infrequent-user types, knows major pain points	(b) Muckrock		
infrequent requester	journalist	help finding common infrequent-user types, knows major pain points	(b) Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press		
frequent requester	journalist	user feedback	(b) BuzzFeed and respondee		
frequent requester	open data	user feedback	(b) Sunlight		
infrequent requester	open data	help finding common infrequent-user types, knows major pain points	(b)		

If you were to categorize your requests, what percent are...

- Not perfected?
 - For what reason?
- Already in your FOIA reading room?
- Otherwise publicly available?
- For a different agency?
- Could be completed by existing publicly disclosed records?
- What else?

- Journey map
- Pain points
- Ideal
- Process of releasing publicly? (release to x release to all?)
-

Ask them to validate these user stories? (**As a** [human], **in order to** [accomplish a goal], **I need to** [be able to do a thing].)

- As an agency, in order to keep up with demand fulfilling requests and avoid unnecessary work, the requests that I receive are
 - for records that my agency has
 - well scoped to what the requester really wants
 - contain contact information
 - contain all the information I've required for FOIA requests in my regulations and required by law
 - not duplicates that already exist publicly (on an agency website, usa.gov, data.gov, a FOIA reading room, etc.)
 - contain the requester's max budget amount
- As an agency, in order to accept/track/fulfill FOIA requests via one central FOIA website, I can receive requests in a way that isn't a significant burden (e.g., is interoperable with or improves my existing process).
- As an agency, in order to provide requesters with status tracking, I can receive and update the status of my request in a way that isn't a significant burden (e.g., is interoperable with or improves my existing process)

Agency/ Component	SIMPLE				COMPLEX				EXPEDITED PROCESSING			
	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days
Office of the AG	16	24.24	<1	229	475	554.11	2	1369	121	105.33	11	184
Office of the DAG	19	18.72	1	41	422	551.22	4	1369	76	76	31	121
Office of the Assoc. AG	20	19.37	2	41	233	299.65	5	984	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Antitrust	11	10.5	<1	20	95.5	247.55	1	916	30	30	30	30
ATF	75	200.74	<1	726	317	410.29	1	1278	52	52	52	52
BOP	20	19.62	<1	135	31	67.85	<1	1385	66	84.77	<1	450

Agency/ Component	Number of Full Grants	Number of Partial Grants/ Partial Denials	Number of Full Denials Based on Exemptions	Number of Full Denials Based on Reasons Other than Exemptions									TOTAL
				No Records	All Records Referred to Another Component or Agency	Request Withdrawn	Fee- Related Reason	Records not Reasonably Described	Improper FOIA Request for Other Reason	Not Agency Record	Duplicate Request	Other *Explain in Chart Below	
Office of the AG	62	63	21	98	5	28	1	1	94	1	10	18	402
Office of the DAG	42	46	15	71	6	22	1	0	0	0	11	8	222
Office of the Assoc. AG	5	8	5	52	1	2	0	0	0	1	7	2	83

Antitrust	22	31	25	42	1	3	1	1	0	0	1	3	130
ATF	73	565	234	182	18	57	0	22	214	23	84	126	1,598
BOP	2,332	2,422	192	406	41	690	188	105	880	124	115	1	7,496
Civil	68	60	20	28	2	15	2	5	14	0	1	2	280

--

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your feedback. Your agency has been super helpful providing us feedback on the FOIA process and I'm especially excited to get into the technical bits of it.

- Remind me again what case management system you're using?
- Do you have any questions about the spec?
- Is this similar to anything else you've done before?
- How does your agency build these sorts of technical needs?
- Do you work with contractors or do you have in-house development?
 - Ballpark, how long does it take from identifying a need to getting a technical team setup?
- We're trying to get a sense of what limits we need to set for file sizes, rate limiting, etc. Any ideas on what your use case is or what you might want to support?
 - File types for attachments
 - File sizes
- Are you familiar with api.data.gov?
- Do you use any formal spec formats, like a JSON Schema or XSD for data types or JSON API or OpenAPI for API definitions?
- How would you prefer to give feedback in the future?

Agency interview notes

[Round 2 synth](#)

[Stephanie and Peggy \(EEOC\) - 6/2](#)

[Michael \(HHS\) - 6/2](#)

[Kathy \(DOT\) - 6/1](#)

[Alexis \(USDA\) 6/1](#)

[Raynell \(CFPB\) - 6/1](#)

[Ryan \(Treasury\) - 5/31](#)

[VA appeals and FOIA - 5/31](#)

[Amanda \(DOJ Criminal Division\) - 5/31](#)

[Jason \(Forest service\) - 5/31](#)

[James Hogan \(DoD\) - 5/31](#)

Stephanie and Peggy (EEOC) - 6/2

- Steps via mail, fax, email and FX PAL form.
- Regardless of format, entered info FX.
- Charge file number is present, FX will route to appropriate district office. 53 offices nationwide, not all process FOIA. 20 FOIA that process FOIA requests. FOIA appeals happen at HQ.
- If no charge file number, manually inspected for routing.
- Search is pulled manually from file room.
- If it's paper, scanned and uploaded to FX. If responsive files are too large, downloaded to thumb drive or CD. If request was via paper mail, the responsive records are printed and sent via USPS.
- Search requests go to the office where records are located (best guess to start). If it requires an extended search (manual or electronic) will be notified back to central DC office for details on time estimate and who would perform search.
- All responsive docs processed via FX. Response to requester via FX.
- **Breakdown of request format?**
- Largest request number is email. Been using FX for 2 years this September (2nd largest). Fax is next, followed by paper mail.
- 99+% requests are for charge files. 50% of the time, 2 requests for same files (employer and employee). Remaining requests infrequent duplicates. Sometimes statistical information, but each has it's own spin so not considered duplicate.
- 2% for already available records.
- 30-40% are not perfected. Charge files are privacy protected, and even parties that have access to files, only have 90 days to access files. If time has expired, they need copy of court complaint. Perfection requires court complaint.
- Rarely receive requests <1% routed to wrong agency.
- Statute dictates which documents are automatically made public, or they determine are important for public to know. Release to one, to all, they are putting anything that is not confidential. 508 compliance was initially a technical barrier and made process longer, but now FX has a function to help make processed documents 508 compliant. Believe it is a default FX feature.
- Publishing is resource intensive; that is the primary barrier.
- **Magic wand:** dedicated resources, including staffing and technology aids for process facilitation (scanning equipment), particularly review of documents, to make it more efficient.
- Dedicated FOIA staff in all district offices. Competing pressures, to enforce employment discrimination laws, then pulling staff away from agency mission to support FOIA. "To call it a pain point is an understatement" (Peggy).
- Investigating and litigation of discrimination cases are the two front lines at EEOC. FOIA is a collateral priority, but not *the* priority. We do quite well considering our resources, compared to many other agencies but very difficult and not what we'd like it to be.

- **Q?** FOIA improvement act 2016, requires natl portal created this fiscal year. How is that going to impact my agency. Are we going to need resources to receive from this portal? Are we needing dedicated people to receive? What burden is this going to impose on us? We need a heads up, for budgeting, technical assistance and resources.
-

Michael (HHS) - 6/2

- **Process?** Decentralized at HHS. CMS, FDA are highest volume, over 30K total requests per year across HHS. Significantly lower for the rest of the agencies. This year is different. Upwards of 25% this year in requests. Typically come in to each operating division. Requests are reviewed by intake staff, logged into intake system. And then reviewed based on where request is clear or need to go back to the requester for clarification. Also fee waivers. Transmitted out to organizations who might have the records that the requester is seeking. Program manager is responsible for making sure request is being processed. Advised of disclosure concerns before being returned to our office. Explanation of the records, and any issues. Then transferred to our processing team. Looking at contents of the records, where they might be exempt from disclosure. They make a release recommendation and then it gets transferred to a supervisor. Any questions that come up would have to be addressed. Eventually handed to me and then to termination.
- From there, we deal with appeals. 0.7% appeal rate, extremely low but does happen. We handle litigation of FOIA related issues. That's basically it.
- One thing, talking with DOJ, I wanted to talk about the decentralized processes. Center for medicaid services, beyond regional structures they have administrative contractors, who also filed requests for info. A few years ago we built a portal for contractors so CMS tracking system could pull data from the contractors. When this national portal came up, I wanted to make sure you take into consideration that contractors might also handle requests. Whatever the solution, we have to make sure they are connected to the system so the requests contractors are handling are also included.
- **CMS and FDA, and others are using custom, CVC OAS all using FOIAX?** Yes. **NIH using custom.** Yes. I am not a fan of FX. Not friendly not intuitive. We get by, but I would even question the reliability of the system. We never hear from the company when they sys goes down. We have to send their support team an email. **Happier with custom?** We did as custom development way back, not perfect but they've been improving it over the years. It's become more reliable, SWIFT. Wasn't too swift when it started ;) **Is swift used everywhere custom?** No, used in CMS, but not everywhere. Once CMS put it in place some of the other operations picked it up. HERSA, health resources... had custom. I don't know FDA system, HRSA when with SWIFT, but not all features.
- **Different formats?** Most agencies have an electronic means of submitting. Email box, or through FX system we have the PAL. Through CMS, even though they may have elec requests, you have to remember when dealing with CMS, the community tends to be on the older side and they may or may not be equipped to submit elec. They might send something in writing. They do receive a lot of mail through the postal service. Most elec submissions would be coming from advocacy orgs and law firms. CMS still receives a lot of hard copy through mail.
- **Paper impact?** One of my main goals, the online submission reduces need for intake staff. Mail, scanned electronically filed, but still have to key in subject, requester, etc. Online submission, the requester is responsible for that. Already saved for the FOIA

staff. Sometimes they have to rekey it. Right now very few limitations on requesters when it comes to FOIA. I don't see an incentive to limit how requests are submitted. Different needs different skillsets. Privacy issues in requests, original signature required sometimes. I have not seen anyone who have designed elec system been able to overcome privacy issues, how to get a signature and how to verify the requester is who they say they are. That's relevant to any portal. You'll see DOJ has a form where they ask folks to complete, requires original signature to verify who they say they are. If there was some way.. I was trying to get people to work on this when I was at CMS> People trying to get their own records, medical , statements. Statements from last 3 years. When req your own records, it's under privacy act. Very intertwined.

- **[Incoming requests] have to do with what's hot in the news.** Eg. in my office, a lot of news regarding ethics waivers in current administration. So far, we've received 4 req for ethics waivers granted by HHS. One organization in exec branch dealing with this. Probably applies to other agencies too. I suspect they're all up in reqs. 4-500 req for same type of records across gov. For Percentage, hard to give. Based on news. Issues related to healthcare reform. We must have many records. Related to health care reform. New administration we're dealing with advocacy requests emails regarding senior officials on particular subject. At this point in time, probably 30% of reqs we request are dealing with specific subject matter, and that breaks down to specific subject matter. 1557 reqs, which has to deal with LGBT issues under affordable care act. We get those types of requests. So for FDA if controversial drug, might get a volume pertaining to that particular drug. Other components might also get that, CDC, might get more reqs during an outbreak. CDC, NIH, FDA, might all get similar requests based on an event. And records from senior officials about what they are doing about it.
 - **Magic wand? Easy. Different systems, different data collection is my one issue, 20 years experience. Enterprise-wide tracking system. To provide details you're trying to provide. The national platform could hook into this system. Any ad hoc reports I can run. Across any and all divisions. That's what would improve FOIA admin within HHS. FX?** Absolutely, they haven't shown they can address issues quickly. We've brought up, but don't get their attention. **FO? H** Have not looked at in in years. Someone has incorporated my workflow, not sure if its ?? or FO.
 - **Q? What are your next steps? Discovery phase, talked to members of public, cont interviews for next few weeks. Prototype non functional, but reflecting our learnings. Tangible, so real people can confirm or deny if it reflects their realities. DOJ committed to having something functional by the EOY. Focused on figuring out agencies describing what their process looks like in a technical format.**
-

Kathy (DOT) - 6/1

- **Can you describe the steps involved in responding to a FOIA request?**
 - Most come in via email these days. Federal aviation receive 75% of requests, they use a different system which is very intricate. We all receive them electronically and they get logged into our tracking system, there is not a way for the public to check the status, they still have to call. All search memos are electronic. We collect records in different ways, we used to get CDs and now we have a shared drive. Foia temp. Data transfer is where they are sent and then moved somewhere more secure.
 - Centralized system - almost everyone using Adobe, half are using Concordance, when the case is closed it gets emailed, sometimes on a CD, and then gets closed out in the system. home-grown system: FAA; national tracking system
 - **What percent of your requests come in through paper mail, fax, email, web?**
 - Over 50% email, quite a few by mail but we try to convert people, I don't know why people would want to wait. We do receive faxes, but a very small percentage. We offer it but discourage it.
 - Does the format (paper mail, fax, email, web) affect how you handle it?
- **What percentage of the requests you receive are:**
 - **For a record someone else has also requested?** 5%? Right now we have some, for the secretary's calendar, we typically don't see. During the transition, we had a lot of requests, and we linked to our website.
 - **Already publicly available?** Not too often, but we try to educate as they come in. one thing we posted was the incoming congressional logs coming in from house and senate. Requestors looking for logs for a specific person could be directed there. We just try to get on the phone or email to educate.
 - **Not perfected?** Probably pretty high 5-10%, that doesn't mean they don't get logged in when they shouldn't be. Now in the federal highway system, we can poll things and we have a perfected and not perfected button. To me it's more important to get it in, even if one slips through the cracks.
 - **Should be directed elsewhere?** DOJ forces us to with annual reports to refer within or outside agencies. When we get something that is for one of our components, which happens, we forward the request to the correct FOIA email box and copy the requester, that way if the requestor disagrees, they know who to follow up with. And they don't get logged in. Almost none are sent to the wrong dept.
- **Are there any technical barriers to posting more documents online?** Yup, 508 compliance, period, that's it. You could also have political interference, but not a big one. Some of our agencies have an it dept. That you can send to and they will post it. We don't have that. We are trying to leverage our program offices, to get documents in a format that they can read. The release to all, that we were opposed to, did not come out as strong as we hoped, the ones we posted were the ones that we really care about.

- **If you could wave a magic wand to address one issue in the FOIA space, what would that issue be? (other than 508)** probably a doc management type. Were slowly moving into this. We have concordance to help with the processing of emails. Were going from computer to computer collecting records. The department is going in the right direction, but we're not there yet. With capstone we will get former employees records, but a lot of that is general records. We're open with the it stuff. Anything that can be done, instead of that manual, putting things out on the table would help.
 - **Questions - what does the portal look like? What does it look like in your dreams?**
 - Sometimes we get questions about drivers licenses, which are not about records and we have to educate the requester. We send links to educate users. We used to get some of TSA's reqs, (in dhs) but now we're not really getting requests for the wrong things.
-

Alexis (USDA) 6/1

- Requests are entered into tracking database or electronic mailbox. When requests come in for outside the PAL, officer enters into it to the FOIAXpress tracking system.
- **Request format breakdown?** PAL 20%, electronic mailboxes each agency has set up 60-70%, remainder done by mail.
- **Request format impact?** "USDA is a monster", certainly with how requests... we have "frequent flyers", that's frequent requesters. Misrouting happens because of the PAL, they like to hit the first component in the list, so they get a lot of misdirected requests. The component brings it up with us and we route it to the right place. Typically outside of PAL, it does end up in the right place. We put up a disclaimer where if you're not sure where something should go, then to send it to the dept FOIA office, but it hasn't seemed to mitigate it very much.
- 50% of the PAL is one of those. We're receiving more and more requests that implicate multiple agencies. We can coordinate a response around this.
- Can't speak for the dept office, but offices under us, those non-perfected requests are averaging about 50% which is fairly new. With change of administration we saw an increase in number of non-perfected requests. We're seeing a lot more requests that are very broad, unduly burdensome. Certainly an uptick with the change in administration.
- **Is this uptick not reflective of frequent flyers?** No, some are from frequent flyers. Recently in the USDA news, APHIS, some of the databases where APHIS was posting and that data were removed. A fear that we would follow suite and pull down information with other agencies. This was not true, but public went in with much broader requests. Both frequent requesters and newbies.
- **What % for records are already public?** Very small percentage. Definitely less than 5%
- **What % for record for something someone else had also requested?** With new administration and APHIS removing info from website, we have a bunch of people come in asking for everything and anything on the website. That triggered the rule of 3. For APHIS, most is about the same information. So we're providing this to those groups on a rolling basis.
- **So APHIS data was taken down but back up in a different place?** Went down because of privacy concerns. Then we reviewed and redacted accordingly. Some of it has been posted back up on the website, but not in the same format. So this was not good for some people and saw a huge uptick in APHIS interest, the first week after that removal receiving anywhere from 200-300 per week. Previously 20-75 per week.
- **Are there any technical barriers to posting more?** Not just FOIA in USDA that is decentralized, many systems, including 508 compliance, IT service providers. Each component is working with different teams when trying to comply with those requirements. 508 is very costly. The thought is we want to focus on the process and posting becomes secondary. Trying to meet the statutory obligation to post the ones meeting rule of 3. But the lawsuits that result from not processing the request all together, so we do what we can. Working with IT web providers, they just don't have the resources for that.

- **Farm Service Agency is biggest recipient of requests?** Typically we get 20-24K and they typically crank out 80% of that.
 - FSA headquarters is using FOIAXpress, field office is using FOIACAP (homegrown FOIA-Capture system) because they can't afford the license for FOIAXpress. Home grown system is to capture data for the annual report.
 - OIG uses a their own separate FOIAXpress system. It's a completely different system.
 - **Magic wand?** The need to process complex requests. FSA is largest processor and a lot is very individual in nature. Requests asking: I want to know about my loan, or my farm, and it's changing. A lot more complex requests are coming in now which requires a different skill set. So getting the resources to hire a government information specialist. And then getting that specialist for those complex requests. I've been on many panels and I've gone back to re-advertise because to do the analytical work we need is specialized and hard to find people with that skillset.
 - Resources are tight and at USDA, most of our processors were doing it in addition to whatever they normally do. Back then we had straightforward, simple requests. But now that we have more complex requests, having that part time duty doesn't work for us anymore.
 - **Questions?** Portal will allow for agencies to use their existing systems but will allow agencies with no system to use it. Will it be an option to switch to the portal?
 - Will it allow additional reporting features to the requestor community? **Probably not, hasn't come up for requesters. Is that something you've heard from your frequent flyers?** Yeah, one convo recently they had heard they would be able to check the validity of agency reports more accurately through the new portal. I had not heard that so I was curious. But if you're cranking out reports and we're cranking out reports, we want to make sure there's not two separate datasets. **Right, we want to avoid duplicate data sources.** We would love to participate in a pilot or anything.
-

Raynell (CFPB) - 6/1

- Receive hard copy, mail, faxes or email, mostly email, scan into FOIAXpress, general intake process.
 - Input to FOIAXpress
 - Contact internal folks to determine who is best able to respond
 - **Percentage Breakdown?**
 - Less than 2% fax, 10% hard copy, everything else is definitely emails. The formats don't require how we handle it. With the fax we just scan it in, but otherwise treat it exactly the same.
 - Email is more efficient because it would take out that additional step to scan.
 - We deal with a lot of sophisticated requesters, typically the requests are perfects, about 80%. As far as things that have already been released? That is fairly rare since we have the reading room and the log. About 10%. Already publically avail? 5% we still respond but just give email address or reply where they can find that. Ones that we need to direct elsewhere? 5%.
 - The bulk of our requests are from requestors that we are familiar with, some are new, but the majority are requestors we commonly work with.
 - **Tech. barriers?**
 - Not right now, I think that may be something we wanna talk about in the future, you know file space is not infinite, but it's not an immediate concern.
 - **Magic wand?**
 - Hmm good question. Probably the amount of time that is required to make something 508 compliant. Everything around compliance and user accessibility.
 - **Does the age of agency affect requests?** Absolutely, i think we're a little bit more efficient than other agencies because all our documents are electronic, we have never had paper records.
 - When you deliver them, are you delivering also online? The majority are sent by email, where there are voluminous records we put them on a cd. Depends on size and whether or not the requestor has given an email address.
 - What do you require? We need contact info - home address and a name.
 - **General concerns?** We have to put in a safeguard so folks who want to request cannot access all agencies. Maybe that could be handled with one agency per request situation. Maybe could only submit one request at a time. We were going to suggest a required field could be a phone number, this is very helpful when we need to address issues. A point of contact would be helpful, someone to answer questions and make sure requests are perfected. I have received misdirected messages, that are not even requests, sometimes a comment or a complaint.
-

Ryan (Treasury) - 5/31

- **Steps involved?** Treasury requests received centrally by email/fax, mail or web portal. Requests are reviewed centrally, entered into DB, ack letter sent by email or mail. Initiate search for records. Gather the records, could be out in the field, come back to central Office. Generate response letter reviewed by supervisor staff. Response then transmitted to requester by email or mail. Most things are done by email now. Usually form is a PDF.
- For IRS sent out in paper form or encrypted on disk (CD) by mail. Do this to protect taxpayers' information.
- Percentages - very small percentage by mail (about 10%). Majority are received by web portal - more than 60%. 30% are received by email, we have fax avail but receive few requests, have thought about stopping this as an option, but other agencies use this and might get in trouble for stopping this as a service.
- **Does format affect processing?** Yes, worked with IT managers, we have a home grown system MS sharepoint. Web portal and connected to the FOIA system so we can import requests directly . Have some technical challenges with that connection that we are working through. Fax/mail scanned as PDF and entered into the system. GoFOIA is used as main database. FOIAXpress?
- **Breakdown of types of requests** - i'd say 60% are directly from try headquarters, 60% of those are imperfect requests, seeking publically avail info or are closed for other reasons. 40% are requests we go on to complete. Looking at the other bureaus, I don't have a good sense for the number of requests that fall into those buckets.
- Some have a privacy impact, would not be able to release publicly.
- **Percentage of non-perfected?** 40% of the 60% request is broad, doesn't specifically identify records, is already publicly available or is not a treasury record. Often going back with requesters.
- **How to determine which doc will be published** - currently we are updating, we currently receive 3 requests and will flag, will make info avail once it is requested once. When people log in they can see they have 3 requests so they know they have to be addressed, this is a manual process, generally wait until we have several docs to be posted, so try to post monthly, but quite often more than that. {try to post in bulk}
- **Technical barriers?** 508 compliance is something we've been grappling. We have a lot of historical documents all the way back to the founding of Treasury we're trying to digitize. Currently public but they have to walk in the door to get it. Trying to make it available proactively. One big barrier. Is coding it for 508 accessibility. It's a burdensome process. Don't have tools to do that in an automated matter. I can't say it's been a problem for our FOIA disclosures, the volume is much less. But if we wanted to post all FOIA requests, that would be a challenge. A more significant challenge. Another challenge is simply the FOIA office doesn't have direct control of the postings. We have to go through IT to post things online. So those are resources outside of my control, could result in delay or... I

wish I had more control over what I was able to post online and the timeliness I was able to post.

- **Magic Wand:** Oh my Gosh! I wear multiple hats, I have FOIA, I have privacy, I have records, a big problem is the availability of access to the records being requested. Often gov agencies are not set up in a way we can do efficient searches for documents. Want to create processes that can support using individual emails. A lot of efficiencies could be saved by doing searches in the background using IT instead of custodial searches.
 - Excited to be working with you on the upcoming portal. Please feel free to reach out. As part of our gov reform efforts looking at going to an enterprise wide solution for agency currently have 5 systems, FOIAXpress, GoFOIA, aFOIA, home grown solution. Looking for COTS product, something commercially available, that we can use without major modification.
 - **FOIAXpress?** Looking at that seriously in IRS. Looking to leverage existing contracts but still in the beginning of exploring options and market research. Still need to market and compete.
 - **FOIAOnline?** Haven't looked at it yet, might go to CBP to look at how they've done it. Will be definitely something to look at.
 - We have war stories, IRS could have some unique stories about taxpayer information.
-

VA appeals and FOIA - 5/31

[intros and explanation of national FOIA portal]

- Veterans claims files are the bulk of the requests that come in, things that build up over decades
 - A lot of is it benefits and compensation-related
 - At various times in the process, vets file because they don't have full access to the benefits
 - The VA doesn't print them anymore and instead puts it on a CD and sends to them
- FOIA request process is informal when it comes to vets, everything in the VA system is meant to be low-process and as open-access as possible
- The requests come in saying "please give me a copy of my claims file"
 - The majority are processed out of the records in St Louis some come to us in Bureau of Veterans Appeals
 - **Most requests are through paper mail**
 - There is a preferred format for the requests, but not all of them follow the format
- **Can you tell us about what kind of info vets are trying to get?**
 - I don't have numbers on this - There are some separate FOIA requests, most vets are seeking a copy of their claims file
 - Their claims file can include anything - their military service records, includes things the VA has sent out - any time correspondence has been sent out, medical records - it's a wide variety of things - sometimes handwritten notes on veterans behalf
 - I don't know VA-wide about the nature of more traditional FOIA requests - the board receives requests more for looking for data on the process - requests for email correspondence and court holds/stays
 - The reason for the digital service is because we are limited in our reporting capabilities - by the nature of the system, some of the older data is replaced by newer
- **Can you tell me more about your roles on this work?**
 - To process appeals, the VA relies on a tool called VACOLS - a tool created in the 1980s and the original creator is the same person who maintains it today
 - There are half a million records in the system of appeals
 - One person from the team built it over the years ad hoc, as different features were needed - this tool continues to be relied on but has been "bandaided together"
 - We were supposed to replace this tool in 1992 and are just now getting around to it
 - Working with new tool called casflow built by the Digital Service to make sure we have a reliable system to process appeals from beginning to end

- Simplify workloads, streamline appeals and make things work better
 - Caseflow from moment of creation until a final decision is made
 - **Caseflow**
 - What we did, before I joined the team, built tool e-folder express which allows people who are processing FOIA and privacy act requests to download entire folder with all the records at once
 - Before this, people were downloading one document at a time from VBMS the case management system - this was incredibly time-consuming and error-prone
 - **How do veterans know where to go to file these requests?**
 - That's a good question - I'm not sure I know the answer
 - Usually the POC is the regional office, every state has one - I'm assuming they point in the right direction
 - VA implemented system called centralized mail - 2-3 years ago - they have done their best to eliminate all but a call center. Regional offices have no external phone number, all calls go through the central call center.
 - Anything you're mailing to VA will go to a PO box in wisconsin if you are in one half of the country or to georgia for the other half of the country
 - Dispatch request
 - The FOIA team in VACO - VA Central Office
 - **Anything you want to give us a heads up about for common VA requests via FOIA?**
 - When they complete a FOIA request, the first thing they do is look for that letter with the record - there is some sort of paper record
 - I also saw, and this might be dated, in the past they sometimes charge for photocopying after a certain number of pages - I'm not sure how you'd handle that
-

Amanda (DOJ Criminal Division) - 5/31

**What percentage of your requests are:
duplicates?**

not perfected?

directed to the wrong agency?

- For duplicates, we don't get a lot. We do get things that overlap, maybe just like 5%, like something really big happens in the news. We generally try to handle those as a group.
- We get a substantial amount that are directed to the wrong place, directed to us and shouldn't be. It's usually people who have been prosecuted. They should usually be writing to the executive office for us attorneys - that's ¼ to ½
- We don't get a lot of requests for info that's already publically available because we don't have a lot that's public.
- Deferred prosecution agreements are online, but not everything related to it. Underlying documents is often what a lot of people come to ask about.
- Not perfected - sometimes people ask for the prosecution record, application for title 3 or wiretap. Sometimes when people write in to us, we can't tell [what our role was]
- Sometimes we need to call people back to figure out if they're interested in one specific case or something larger policy-wise.

What are the phases in the response process? (This is around statuses)

- When it comes in, people on the intake team look at it, (is it us? State and local? etc) then they screen for if it's actually something the crim div has. About a decade ago, the responsibilities were different but we still get asked for some of that stuff.
- Next, if it is crim, they start to work with our contacts or figure out what's already publicly out there or we just need that to know where to search. Once they whittle down those things

Are there any technical barriers to posting more documents online?

- resource barrier, not technical
- there's not that much that's released that's actually valuable
- i don't want to post 5 out of 995 pages and say 'here's everything about x' and have people get upset

What makes a request difficult to fulfill?

- Policy things that cut across different sections, which section do we go to? Getting email and the right date range
- Understanding the exemptions is a learning curve
- Figuring out who you need to talk to
- Let's say a request is old, that's challenging
- When we need to talk to the litigators, it's hard to get ahold of them.
- If crim is prosecuting a really large gang, need to ask how the defendants are related and how we can separate them takes time
- Everything gets manually entered

Post mail/fax/email, as applicable

How might a National FOIA web platform impact requests submitted through post mail, fax, or email?

OR How has your agency's FOIA request web submission site impacted requests submitted through post mail, fax, or email?

If you could wave a magic wand to address one issue in the FOIA space, what would that issue be?

- If there was a way to have people better understand what we do and don't do just to cut down on all the routing, that would save us time we could use for processing requests.
 - We also face a challenge with the public understanding how nuanced the review we do is and how much time it takes. For ex, one requester has asked for something really straightforward as far as the search time, we worked with him to narrow it, and he doesn't understand why it's taking so long, we're not going to explain how many different people we have to talk to.
 - **Main issue with transparency?**
 - I think it's more resources. The public is accustomed (including me) having instant access to things in a reasonable amount of time and they just don't understand the nuances of what goes into making a request and determining... frequent requesters understand, but there's other groups that even just explaining where they're at in the queue and that's what we're working on just doesn't fix the annoyance on their part.
-

Jason (Forest service) - 5/31

- **What percentage of your requests are Duplicates?**
- **not perfected?**
- **directed to the wrong agency?:**
- 240 requests in his region, typically not duplicates. Usually ask for a lot, don't always know what they're asking for. A lot of time policy groups ask for a lot of stuff, about 80% of the requests require us to go back to the requester for something. They ask for big piles of stuff and we have to go back to them and explain that will take a really long time. [He has been good about getting back to requests immediately] We get a general idea of what they're asking for and I go to the requesters office and try to figure out if it's what we have, and I go back to them with a better idea of what we have to offer and we work on scoping the request from there
- **What are the phases in the response process? (This is around statuses)**
 - Usually we get a paper letter in the mail, directly to the regional inbox or any forest inbox. They're able to answer [sometimes]
 - I'll go to the records holder and ask for a breakdown of what they have.
 - **Mainly goal is to get them what they need as fast as possible, and we try to explain that they may get a whole bunch of stuff they might not necessarily want.** We get the request scoped and perfected with them and put into FOIAXpress.
 - Because the level of tech is not the same here as it is in DC, we do our best, put it on CDs, get it out the door, FOIAXpress has made requests easier.
 - FX has automatic perfection - which is kind of annoying because that's not how it's supposed to work.
 - Requests are not perfected until we tell FOIAXpress to perfect it.
 - Over 90% (95%) of requests come in through email, law firms prefer paper, I guess they see it as permanent records. I don't see a complication with either one of those. If we can perfect it on that date, we start that 20/30 day clock
 - [Keep in mind you won't be able to track the paper in tracking]
 - It doesn't matter if it is coming in paper or electronically.
 - [Sends an example, like an Annual Report, and asks if anything in there peaks their interest]
 - When we do scope these with them, I usually try and tell them, if we scope this down so you can get information fast, if there is anything that peaks your interest, call me again and we can tailor a request for that specific information. Helps the requestors get a better idea of how long it will take and if it will cost them anything.
- **How do you determine what documents will be published to a public reading room?**
 - Unfortunately, right now, the only office that publishes is the Washington office and they're undergoing a website redesign and they haven't posted anything since before I got here. The website is really behind, like from the early 2000s.

They keep saying they're going to upgrade it, but I haven't seen anything. As far as what gets published, I would have to say we would just go with stuff that is pertinent, major reports. We partook in the release to all pilot from last year, it was an interesting experience. If we had the ability to post directly from a central document processing program, it would be a lot easier to post automatically. I know FOIAXpress PALs

- I have used FoiaXpress since 2007, and have had varying levels of success. It's always a very painful experience. There's a lot of bugs they'll have to work out. Not a lot of companies will put a lot into building this.
 - Air Force has been using PAL program to get requests. They use it to work the documents and then PALs to post it online. It seems to be the way to go.
 - **Are there any technical barriers to posting more documents online?**
 - We have to get it to a remote office, in this case Washington, and there's a lot of resistance to using FOIAXpress across the Forest Service. It's a generational thing. The younger users have an easier time grasping how to use it a lot of the older users don't see the utility. The real utility is getting them to the Washington Office instead of having to use Sharepoint or mail a CD or thumbdrive. I've been trying slowly to get everyone to use FOIAXpress or Sharepoint to move documents around. The ones who get on board with it seem to really like it. Basically it's just moving documents around, there's no modern interface between us and the website and remote opps is doing all the posting.
 - Depends on how we get requests from you - if we have to put it into the system. I do like the ideas of a central request portal, I just think it's important to get people to use it.
 - Under USDA bc everyone is using FOIAXpress it's a matter of getting everyone to use the system.
 - However the army who processes 1000 stats a year, they're on a difference system. It's a huge hurdle for you guys to get your system to talk to other systems.
 - I am the only one who does FOIA 100% of the time out here. I would prefer if requesters actually call, that way if there is a big issue we can address it.
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James Hogan (DoD) - 5/31

- **What percentage of your requests are:**
 - **Duplicates?**
 - **not perfected?**
 - **directed to the wrong agency?**
 - As you know we are quite decentralized, we have about 30 different components, we don't keep those metrics
 - A consultation from other agencies - it goes to the wrong DOD branch. 1-2% come to us that should go to State for ex. For the ones that are misdirected they will primarily come to OSD. Maybe 5% all together of the ones go to the wrong place.
 - Foia.gov helps people understand up front what each component does.
 - Requestors are usually savvy enough to send it to the right components
 - **That is resource intensive - the 5% that go to the wrong place - sometimes it's a mystery where it goes and we have to do some research.**
 - Duplicates: That's unusual, but for detainees. They will sometimes let each component know. [Different commands handle different detention parts] the savvy requesters will send it to all 4 places, that's a small number like 2%, but then you have another subset of requesters who ask for the same thing but tweak it a little.
 - Usually the duplicates are topics of high public interest - such as one that dealt with senior officers (gen flynn) they have to go through the process to get a waiver to be an agent for a foreign entity - small percentage though. Usually we don't know at our level if something is going out, unless it's brought to our attention.
 - Large majority of requests go out to specific military installations. Security police reports or some kind of incident.
 - Sometimes there are parts of DoD with functions we didn't know about. Even that 5% can be resource conducive.
- **What are the phases in the response process? (This is around statuses)**
 - It comes in and goes through several layers (just our office) "action officers" - we get the request, one person determines where it should go at that level, if it's misdirected or a dup, then they determine within OSD where it needs to go or another department, then that info and whole case file is passed to a team lead who then looks at it and determines who should handle the case and any comments particular to the case like fee waivers or expedited processing and see if it's perfected. The AOs are responsible for examining requests and writing the interim response letter, then task down to the component wait for the response back from the component, they conduct the search and provide all documentation for the case to make it a legally sufficient response then it goes to the AO who reviews the information in the response. If the doc belongs for

other agencies, then they're reviewed and sent out for coordination. Then the final response gets coordinated and they provide a response and it goes out.

- **AO responsible for redactions?** Yes, they take the redactions provided by the component and look for consistency before the response goes out, reviewed by team lead for consistency and makes sure we have legally consistent response before it goes out. The component level would say the send it somewhere in the OSD, they determine what should be released, then the physical process of redaction is done by Chris's office.
 - **What makes a request difficult to fulfill?**
 - Sometimes they don't accurately describe what they're looking for. They ask for anything and everything on a topic and they're on a fishing expedition. The ao's job is difficult to try to get it worded in a way that the people looking for it could figure out what to look for. In the DoD field, this is the most difficult.
 - The fishing expeditions are more difficult. Some unreasonable ones will start to work with you and then at the end say, no, i just want what i originally asked for.
 - Emails tools have made things easier, but the larger volume takes more time and it's difficult to get some requesters to work with you.
 - You also have to check everything for responsiveness
 - Small percentage that didn't want to work with us. A lot of times the news media doesn't want to narrow and they can really overwhelm an office with request after request. People unwilling to work with you is like 40% of your time.
 - One individual had as many request as the archives have, about 400 in a year.
 - I frequently run reports for our office and he is single handedly responsible for the majority of our requests.
 - **If you could wave a magic wand to address one issue in the FOIA space, what would that issue be?**
 - Scoping the requests, the ability to reasonably shut down some requests. The British are allowed to provision some requests.
 - If a requester is making 400 requests, this is ok as long as they're worded properly.
 - The requestors seem to have an idea {misconception} that the all the documents are in one place. Or there is a computer system and you can just press one button and find the documents.
-

[illegible]

				Key:	
				Small effort	
				Medium effort	
				Large effort	
				Extra large effort	
Use Category	As a/an	I need...	so that...	Effort level to implement	Notes
Interoperability: Metadata file	FOIA Researcher	the FOIA metadata for any agency	I can track and compare FOIA processes at different agencies	Small	
Interoperability: Request schema	Agency that uses a case management system	a RESTful HTTPS API spec	we can receive requests from the portal	Small	
Interoperability: Request schema	Agency that receives requests via email	a well-formatted email containing the request	we can receive requests from the portal and enter them quickly into our spreadsheet	Small	
Interoperability: Status tracking	Agency that uses a case management system	a RESTful HTTPS API spec	we can update requests from the portal with status information	Small	
Requests: Improved experience	Requester	to know which regulations the form requirements are based on (ex: link to eregs)	I can trust agencies aren't making the submission process unnecessarily onerous	Small	
Requests: Improved experience	Requester	a confirmation page after submission with a summary of my request and what to expect next	I can feel like my request is being handled as quickly as possible	Small	
Requests: Improved experience	Requester	a confirmation page after submission	I can feel like my request was submitted	Small	
Requests: Communicating different tracks	Requester	to understand the difference between a simple and complex request at submission time	I can create a request that can be processed more quickly	Small	
Requests: Communicating different tracks	Requester	to understand what is involved in fulfilling my request (ex: that not all agencies have digital records that are easily searchable)	I can trust the FOIA process and get less frustrated	Small	
Requests: Asking for PII	Requester	to understand why additional PII might be needed to fulfill my request	I can trust that the government is committed to protecting my privacy and fulfilling my request quickly	Small	
Requests: Setting time expectations	Requester	to understand the time it will likely take to get my records before I hit submit	I can understand what to expect from the FOIA process	Small	Help the user distinguish between a simple and complex request before they submit the form and clearly present median processing times.

Requests: Identifying correct FOIA office	Requester	to understand why selecting the right FOIA office is important	I can submit my request to the right agency the first time	Small	The interface work done on openFOIA is a good starting place for this area of improvement. The requester can clearly see that agencies may have multiple FOIA components, and be able to drill down into each to discover which office mostly likely has the records they are seeking.
Requests: Identifying correct FOIA office	Requester	to understand how to choose the	I can submit my request to the right agency the first time	Small	
Requests: Identifying correct FOIA office	Requester	an agency selector that helps me first select the agency, then drills down to the component level	I can submit my request to the right agency the first time	Small	
Status page: Simple requests	Requester	a receipt/status page with a basic summary of my request (agency, date, subject)	I can know that my request has been received	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At this point, there is no status of the request, only a receipt containing the minimum of Request number and Date of submission. ● Additional details about the request may be included on the receipt/status page as appropriate. ● PII will not be included at this point. As more information is included, appropriate authentication mechanisms must be introduced.

Status page: Simple requests	Requester	to receive an email confirmation after submitting my request	I can feel confident that my request was sent correctly	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic summary of the request (agency, date, subject) may be included in the email. • Email should contain a permanent link to the receipt page. • Limited PII should be published in the email itself.
Status page: Content	Requester	to see a static explanation of each step on the status page	I can understand and appreciate the FOIA process	Small	
Status page: Content	Requester	to see all the contact information for the office on the request status page	I can contact the FOIA office where my request was sent	Small	
Status page: Content	Requester	to see statistics or other historical data about how this agency processes requests, clearly explained and differentiated from real-time queue-based estimates	I can get a sense of when I might expect my request to be completed	Small	
Status page: Communicating updates	FOIA official	a mechanism to allow me to change a status/classification	we can update the status/classification of a request in the portal	Small	This will require authentication mechanism for FOIA offices.
Requests: Improved experience	Requester	request form that follows best practices for usability	I can provide a perfected request	Medium	For this: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agencies provide first draft of the metadata file 2. We identify the most common fields (based on metadata files and research) 3. We build form questions based on the above 4. We improve them with usability testing
Requests: Improved experience	Agency	the request form to guide requesters to make requests that are easier to process	we can handle requests more efficiently	Medium	
Requests: Improved experience	Requester	to understand what info I should include in the description field of my request	I can create a request that can be processed more quickly	Medium	
Requests: Asking for PII	Requester	to submit a request through the portal with only the PII necessary to fulfill my request (ex: name and email)	I can protect my personal information	Medium	Many requesters prefer not to give more personal information than absolutely necessary.

Requests: Confirming e-mail	FOIA Office	require the requester to verify his/her email	we can increase the signal to noise ratio of incoming requests from the portal	Medium	
Status page: Content	Requester	to see how my request was classified (simple or complex)	I can get a sense of when I might expect my request to be completed	Medium	Automatic classification would probably be difficult, but if this classification is performed at the outset of request handling, it would be ideal to provide a mechanism for agencies to update the classification within the portal itself. Syncing with the agency management system to make updates would be classified as an (L).
Status page: Content	Requester	see more information about the details of my request, I need the permanent link to the summary of my request for my eyes only	I can trust that the government is securing my information and protecting my privacy	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This introduces an appropriate authorization mechanism based on the amount and sensitivity of information available on the status page. • This has potential to add friction to the process. • Could an authorization mechanism like login be introduced only *after* the request is created? If we do that, how to we verify the email address *before* submission?
Status page: Content	Requester	a login account	to see a list of all my requests	Medium	This will require login

Status page: Communicating updates	Requester	to receive an email notification whenever its status changes	I can maintain a sense of where my request is in its overall lifecycle	Medium	This is dependent upon completing status update features. We don't want to duplicate efforts of any existing notification systems, or create more work for agencies for updating separate systems.
Search: Finding documents	Requester	government agencies to post indexable/crawable documents	I can find information in the way I normally search (e.g., Google)	Medium	
Interoperability: Metadata file	FOIA Office	a GUI form to walk me through each metadata field; agencies to send me the first draft of metadata files	I can publish my metadata file	Large	
Interoperability: Request schema	Agency with existing portal	the national portal to understanding our existing portal and interact with it automatically	we can receive requests directly into our case management system	Medium/Large	This is a temporary solution that can break easily.
Requests: Making it easier to find existing responsive documents	Requester	to be notified at submission time that there might be existing responsive documents related to the request being submitted	I can find responsive documents faster or improve my request	Small/Large	Prompt the requester within the submission form for methods of finding documents that they may not have already tried.
Requests: Making it easier to find existing responsive documents	Agency	to notify users at submission time that there might be existing responsive documents related to request being submitted	we can reduce duplicate requests	Small/Large	Agencies should continue to be encouraged to proactively publish records
Status page: Communicating updates	FOIA official	changes to my local case management system to automatically update the status of a request within the national portal	we can minimize the number of systems I must maintain	Large	This requires interoperability of some kind. FOIAxpress has the ability to export reports (DHS does this). FOIAonline does not. ● Includes writing a spec for other mechanisms for automated status updates.

Search: Encouraging better requests	Agency	requesters to receive agency recommendations based upon the body of their request.	we can minimize misdirected requests	Extra Large effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations would only be as good as the universe of published information and records. • Determining how much this is able to minimize requests is unclear and would require significant testing. • This would require machine learning work that would require a significant level of effort.
Search: Encouraging better requests	Agency	requesters to see recommendations for existing information and records while writing their request	we can improve the quality and decrease the quantity of FOIA requests	Extra Large effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations would only be as good as the universe of published information and records. • Determining how much this is able to improve requests is unclear and would require significant testing. • This would require machine learning work that would require a significant level of effort.

mics, cameras

letter sized white paper, sharpies

laptop attached to bigger monitor to show Journeymaps on Murally

A. Set Up

Welcome (jtag)

Goals of session (jtag)

- align dev and design, get individual ideas on paper
- determine priorities
- sketch user scenarios
- sketch basic UI (features + pages)

Our research so far, based on interviews

Share and walk through journey maps of :

Requester (Erica)

FOIA processor (VZ)

B. BROAD INTERFACE

SCENARIO: Rachel the Reporter is writing an article about the Keystone Pipeline. She's thinking about making a FOIA request to get information and wants to see what information has already been released under FOIA by government agencies. She has heard there's a new online way to do this called KRANG.

3 mins ASK 1: Jot down, what are the questions she asks herself as she does this? What are her concerns?

5 mins ASK 2: How might this work? What does the interface look like? Sketch how Rachel would search for publicly released information already online and how she determines if its useful for her article.

8-10 SHARE interfaces, surface important questions, attitudes

Go around circle talking what they did and holding up to cameras

10 DISCUSS and list features that come out of this to consider, bring up ones we've previously brainstormed.

C. DEEPER DIVE INTO FEATURE SKETCHING (ED)

5 mins sketch feature [Search]

5 mins quick share

5 mins sketch feature [Search results]

5 mins quick share

5 mins sketch feature [Document view]

5 mins quick share

[5 MIN BREAK?]

D. PROCESSOR STORY (jtag or Erica or VZ)

5 mins

Draw a story how John Processor might do his job to include making more FOIA information available by search? What are the questions or concerns he has around this?

5 min share / Discuss, what are the features that come out of this?

E. WRAP UP (10)

Thank you

Has this surfaced any new questions?

Mini Retro: Helpful? What could be better?

---- end ---

REFERENCE

5 Search

- search by agency
- search by topic
- search by type
- search by date released
- search within content
- browse featured topics?

5 Search Results

- filter by
- proactive or result of FOIA request?

5 Document View

- pdf preview
- related documents
- other documents from agency

(Processor Upload Interface)

Gabriel's Notes

(b) (6) - Investigative research

(b) (6) - Activist and the organization, doesn't file too many requests

Tools

(b) (6) Muckrock, Foia Machine, etc. Resisting using federal government forms

(b) (6) Also uses Muckrock, works with lawyers to try to set document.

(b) (6) Uses targeted google searches, but not usasearch

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Erica: it seems that it's difficult to find records that belong to each agency.

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Erica: you mentioned doing research in reading rooms. What kind of research you do in reading rooms.

(b) (6) the best one is fbo.gov (thing??) Many people don't actually bother to search the libraries but we do. Top level google search, sunlight foundation scout, sometimes usa.gov search.

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Erica: Anything else you would want to improve the process.

(b) (6) Having intimate reports that are maintained regularly. Forfitture.gov, the pdf changes once a week. We need better databases.

abbi

(b) (6)

Reporter, State Tax Today

I've done a whole lot of FOIA at the state level -- mostly in Ohio but also in many other states -- but I've only in the last year or so started using the federal law.

I've fiddled around with various mechanisms, making requests by mail, e-mail, the DOJ eFOIA portal, ifoia.org, MuckRock, and the like, but never really loved any of them.

interview Feb 12th by phone

on phone from 18F:

facilitator:

[Workflows](#)

[Pain Points](#)

[Opportunities we might improve](#)

[Technical and user considerations](#)

[Raw Notes by recorders](#)

Workflows

- Because the barrier to entry for submitting a request is so low, doesn't hesitate to send requests often. First-resort/very pro-active on FOIA.
- For IRS, drafts written letter based on boilerplate language.
- Before writing letter, does research on relevant law, which he cites in the request.
- For iFOIA requests, he updates the site with notes throughout process.
- Continuously calls agencies to check on request. Sometimes finds that his request isn't even being worked on.
- Takes very detailed notes for process bc his organization requires thorough documentation in case of litigations.
- Once he receives a response, if he isn't satisfied he will send an appeal. His organization is not afraid of threatening litigation.

Pain Points

- Biggest problem is getting a hold of somebody who knows what's going on. (Main FOIA contact typically can't provide detailed status.)
- Still have to do this on paper
- The request can easily be ignored

- “Lack of accountability or ‘give-a-damn’ factor” - “if you’re not satisfied with how this process is going you’re welcome to file a lawsuit”
- “We shouldn’t need to go through FOIA for every single thing we need” - open government writ large.
- appeals process is also very slow and there aren’t tools to help you through it

Opportunities we might improve

- Publishing a list of FOIA officers and emails and phone numbers would be very helpful.
- Preferred e-mail for back-and-forth interactions with processor
- Online filing tools (iFOIA, FOIA Machine) are glitchy, often don’t have updated contacts. Muckrock not an option for some organizations with limited budgets.
- Potential opportunity to create better appeal experience.
- Putting more records online would be helpful to his company - they would take advantage of them to find information to publish

Technical and user considerations

- Some tools like Muckrock are too expensive for budget limited organizations.
- Stated preference for e-mail-based communications over web-based back-and-forth with processor

Raw Notes by recorders’ name

drop yer raw notes here with your name.

Erica’s Notes:

(b) (6) I’m a reporter. Most of my FOIA request stuff is for my own stories, but I used to be a manager managing FOIA requests for my reporters, so I have a lot of experience with state FOIA.

How often do you file FOIAs?

I do a lot of work on the state side. I’m filing requests for records from either fed or state on a weekly basis. More frequently on the state side. I’m filing pretty regularly and organizationally, we have standing requests from the treasury and the IRS. We always have stuff that’s supposed to coming in. One of the ones is treasury correspondence, so when someone writes the Treasury with requests

for changes in laws and stuff we're supposed to get copies. That dates back to the 70s, but over the last 10 years we've started to get a lot less because they've interpreted it to mean only letters that come on paper. Most people write by email and we get those. There's some level of compliance but not what we're looking for.

How do you contact the treasury?

There's a woman who's handling it who sends it to us. I don't handle that one myself. I've also tried through the president's Open Government Initiative - every agency is supposed to have someone who's working on transparency stuff, but the person I've been working with has been incredibly unresponsive and unhelpful.

How did you track down the Open Gov initiative?

I met her at Open Government quarterly delegate meeting opened to the public. Her name is Rosa Perry, she's the delegate for the Treasury.

Describe your request process - the point you come across information and go about getting in

For me the bar is lower. I FOIA everything and everything even if I know the law exempts it from disclosure, I slam it down and see what happens. I usually do a little bit of digging to see what the law and whether something is disclosable. A lot of things at the IRS are exempt from disclosure. When I file it I can point to case law or statutory law. I file my FOIAs through an online generator - right now I primarily use iFOIA. I don't use it for DOJ, which has eFOIA portal. I also don't use it for the IRS because they don't accept requests via email. You have to send it on paper to rural Georgia, they redirect it.

How do you know where the request is going?

I know about that from calling and hassling people. I was trying to find an email address, I was calling around. I finally got one but they still want all requests on paper.

How do you go about writing that request?

I use boilerplate language from previous requests, a nice bulleted list. I've used it a hundred times before, I include statutory references.

How often do you request data/databases as opposed to documents?

Probably half of the federal requests I make. I don't think I've ever gotten anything interesting back.

What kind of responses do you usually get back?

The attorney general's office is required to report all stores licensed to sell tobacco, goes to ATF. They compile and maintain a database, and I've tried to get access. I sent it straight to the AG's office, they ignored it for a long time - probably after a month I called and someone told me it was supposed to go to ATF, and then ATF had and it's probably been 6 months or so with no response. After a long time I finally got someone to assign a request number. I think I then submitted an appeal saying my request had effectively been denied after so much time, and they said it was still being processed so my appeal was denied.

I tried to get the visitor log to the treasury. They said they were trying to be more transparent. I asked for that through the open government people, they ran us around and eventually said it had to be FOIAed. It's always no data, that's all we ever get.

Have you ever used any of the FOIA reading rooms?

I've poked around in them. We've gotten useful data through data.gov. But I don't do much in the reading rooms - I don't usually start there, I google for it. If it's in the reading rooms google will bring me there.

If there was a reading room that published hundreds of documents a month, would you use it?

If they were putting out large amounts of data, like if IRS was doing that, my company would be pulling everything down that came in there. We're also a document service, so whenever IRS publishes a new regulation we publish that. Everything would get pushed online on our side.

Threshold - what would be worth the time and effort would make a reading room worthwhile?

I would guess we're already keeping tabs on it. We try to be comprehensive so I imagine we're watching it.

Tell me about your experience with iFOIA and muck rock

so far i haven't been in love with anything i've used. muck rock is a paid service and my non profit doesn't want to pay for it. i've found iFOIA and FOIA machine to be really glitchy, doesn't have all the information you want. as you use iFOIA it's building up a database of contacts, so when it has that it's valuable, but in both cases it's been really glitchy. confuses local and federal requests, doesn't let you advance from screen to screen. I love the idea of it and hope that maybe muck rock is better since it's paid.

Would you say that identifying the correct place to send a FOIA is a burden?

On the federal side it's not too problematic, most of the websites tell you where to send a request. If I know the agency's url I'll just do irs.gov/foia.

Pain points?

one of the biggest frustrations for me is the trouble that i have getting a hold of someone after the request has been filed, someone who will be accountable for that request so i can get information. I've kept track of all these conversations. You can't get in touch with anyone who's actually in charge, you can try calling someone and leaving a message and hope they call you back. I got a call back from the person in charge of answering the phone - didn't know anything about my request. They want you to go through that main FOIA office number.

How do you keep track of the conversations?

in iFOIA i can keep notes every time i reach out to someone. my company isn't afraid of doing foia litigation, so they want a really solid record of what's going on with all these requests.

What's the typical timeline that you hear back?

From the IRS, usually a week or two to hear back. You have to send it on paper and it goes through their whole process. Then they still don't want to do the process through email, they want to send pieces of paper to me. It was a problem because they wouldn't change my contact when I moved. Then there's a big gap between the acknowledgement letter and when you actually get a response.

I have one on reports to make sure tax payer information is secure. I requested the report for every state. I negotiated in advance to get them on a rolling schedule. That's 51 documents I requested, and I think 2 days ago I got the 4th or 5th one. That was a lot of months ago that I requested them. Back in May. And then there are the redactions that are crazy.

What would be your preferred means of communication?

Email. Prefer over web based communication. What I envision would be to have a FOIA.gov where you can submit your requests to any agency. For the actual correspondence it would be better through email. Also to have phone numbers available. The government might say something back but it might not answer your question - you get a non response. Being able to communicate by phone and work through that stuff is critical to making that work. It's also good because it reminds them that they're dealing with real people, on both sides of the request.

Other pain points?

I think whatever the process is for requests could be transferred to handling the appeals process as well - that requires a lot of work too. The major pain points are that i still have to do this on paper, the request can be ignored - i know i have to go to the back of the line, but it shouldn't take months to find out what's going on, that it's an administrative error. Something to give the public some sense of accountability - i always get "if you're not satisfied with how this process is going you're welcome to file a lawsuit". There's no sense that there's any accountability and it's so hard to get hold of anyone or know what's going on with my request, and that's aside from

Other things that would make it better?

I think having some centralized spot where I don't have to hunt agency to agency to find out where i'm sending a request would be a very easy win.

We shouldn't have to go through FOIA for everything we want. Often the answer is that you have to go through FOIA - but there should be a channel that doesn't require a team of lawyers.

Raw notes by VZ

(b) (6) [REDACTED], EFF

interview Feb 9th at their office
present from 18F: Erica
on phone from 18F: Victor, Gabriel
facilitator: Erica

[Workflows](#)

[Pain Points](#)

[Opportunities we might improve](#)

[Technical and user considerations](#)

[Raw Notes by recorders](#)

Workflows

- A: 15/25 year maybe more requests B: Probably average one a month
- News story often drives request need.
- Often focus of request is not on government but on organization doing business with government
- Use FOIA.gov to find contact info
- Site Code of Federal Regulations to reference 'news media'
- Top-level Google search of gov domains, usa.gov search, Sunlight's Scout, and fbo.gov prior to submitting FOIA request. "I think a lot of people don't look online before filing a FOIA. I try to look before I file."

Pain Points

- **"I've just given up on getting anything."**
- "It was really quite frustrating."
- "There's always something."
- Relationship with processors can be difficult: **"A lot of requests are adversarial."**
- **"There's this presumption that you're going to be able to know which department within this gigantic agency is going to have your record."**
- when you file online there's no record of the request, so you can't follow up on it (have no evidence showing when you filed) "It's gotta publish, it's gotta have a receipt."
- "I don't know why they don't put everything in a reading room."
- **CFRs differ among agencies, "if there's a difference it's up to you to spot it"**
- **no one at FOIA hotline returns calls until you say "let me know if this is too burdensome"**

- Often FOIA processors are unresponsive until an org publicly writes up something negative.
- lack of OCR

Opportunities we might improve

- **make it easier to figure out what departments within agencies are responsible for what kind of requests**
- more information about the differences between how agencies process requests (time to process, method of filing and communication)
- just put everything online
- Bring back National Response Center's searchable incidence database
- better online tool for filing requests that gives you documentation
- "if you could search all the docs across the DOJ it would enable things we can't even think about now"
- "a template for requests would help many people"
- publishing FOIA logs would be good

Technical and user considerations

Raw Notes by recorders' name

drop yer raw notes here with your name.

Erica's Notes:

(b) (5)



(b) (5)



Gabriel's Notes

(b) - Investigative research

(b) (6) - Activist and the organization , doesn't file too many requests

Tools

(b) (6) Muckrock, Foia Machine, etc. Resisting using federal government forms

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Erica: Anything else you would want to improve the process.

(b) (6) : Having intimate reports that are maintained regularly. Forfitture.gov, the pdf changes once a week. We need better databases.

VZ's notes

3 years

1 year?

A: Higher?

B:

A: Generally use Muckrock, FoiaMachine, iFOIA

Online forms sometimes, but generally resist fed forms

B: Muckrock, written letters.

A: Targeted search through :gov domain search in Google

Decision to make req

A: Prompted by news story, desire for more info than reporter asked about

Random ("Like playing go fish")

B: Once I felt it was under my tool belt, I felt

Low bar once it became a default information source

"It's a very useful tool that we use quite regularly."

A: 15-25/year, maybe more

B: I probably average one a month

B: Site Code of Federal Regulations to reference 'news media'

CFR's are similar

B: Identify info they're interested in, see if an org has done business with the federal gov

Use FOIA.gov to find address

Computer Cop

Asset forfeiture funded software

Sketchy letter from Spyware/Parental supervision software published on their website.
Distributed by law enforcement agencies.

FOIA'd Treasury

Months go by, no response until states "if it's too burdensome, then we can discuss"

Treas: "Ask for less"

Called OGIS

Document shows up on Inspector General site as fraud alert

"I've just given up on getting anything."

"The only time they'd call me back is when I said 'let me narrow it down for you'."

"It was really quite frustrating."

"There's always something."

A: Copyright stuff. When I file against US PTO

"They are perfectly happy to give me what I want

There's no adversarialness

Whereas I've got one against the USTR, and that one just dropped on the ground. I haven't heard from them."

"A lot of requests are adversarial."

A: "There's this presumption that you're going to be able to know which department within this gigantic agency is going to have your record."

B: Lack of accountability

Bounced back and forth between

Often use online third-party form

"I think a lot of people don't look online before filing a FOIA. I try to look before I file." FBO.gov?

Sometimes usa.gov

Most reading rooms filled with

"The purpose reading rooms serve is usually served by MuckRock"

"I don't know why they don't put everything in reading room."

"At the very least the log is something that FOIA requesters know to request every October"

It seem like a te

"It's gotta publish, it's gotta have a receipt."

"Agencies should not be *allowed* to have form that don't generate a receipt."

"For people who haven't done one of these, the threshold for 'how do I file this letter' is high... the filer needs to get a receipt. I won't use a form for that reason."

B: [we need] more sites that are generating things that area requested on a regular basis...

Any time there's a natural disaster or chemical spill, you can check

ADY? ABBYY OCR

Teserac?

Date: 1.29.15

Michael North: new attorney; day 4 in his office

Monica Potter-Johnson: been in FOIA since 2001

- Primary Responsibility: process and review requests; determines which program office may have the document and uses FOIA Xpress to do so; wants to make sure they send the documents back that best answer that
- All within FOIA Xpress
- Moving to electronic signatures

Wilson Moore: senior paralegal - in FOIA since 2003

- Main responsibility is processing as well; request must be opened and reviewed, loaded into the system, and then assigned to someone to process/work on; in between that, a person requests the documents and to process them
- All also read the request to determine if its an accurate FOIA request

Gene Bang: supervisor

Kick-Off: Here to learn about your experience handling requests and how you handle responsive documents after that

For the type of requests that come in, what's your sense of ones that are obviously inaccurate or need further thought of where to send?

- Gene: the two biggest types of documents that fall into that line of request are 1) personal information request about an inmate but there is no inmate signature or approval to give to a person (not an original signature, not filled out correctly, etc.) and 2) to determine if its a proper FOIA request
 - Inmate may write 10 pages and the request isn't clear, then someone else takes a look; if two people can't understand a request, then they send a return for authorization
 - At least 10 a day returns for authorization purposes; more can be found in the FOIA Annual Report (improper FOIA request and another designation)

What's the process like when you work with the prisons and not just in DC?

- Monica: When reviewing the request, if more information is here then its kept in the central office. Other offices are then emailed. If more is out in the field, then they send it out.
- Gene: Different offices around the country and over 200 facilities; completely centralized. Monica and Wilson have the subject matter expertise of FOIA and BOP to know where to get records from.

What's the nature of FOIA requests that you can answer centrally versus other areas?

- Wilson: For BOP, all come here and are reviewed at HQ. When they review the request, they are usually asking for something in their inmate central file. Once they know where

the inmate is, they'll make the request to the regional office that then asks the direct location.

- For central office work, they handle broader information like how many inmates died in a certain time period or a contract regarding a specific prison facility.
- Gene: Get about 15k requests a year and internally are divided. Out of the 15k, 3-4k are handled completely within HQ. The others are handled amongst the 6 regions. HQ processes the bulk of the.

What's your sense of the requests you get asking for similar or identical information? Is it mostly individualized?

- Wilson: It's hard to pinpoint because it's a wide range of things. Mostly they're asking for generalized things. One other thing processed here are referrals from other agencies to make a determination if a shared record should be released. ICE sends a number of them.
- Monica: There may be spikes in items and try to get them on the website.

What's motivated you to put things on the website?

- Monica: When someone at the office notices its been frequently requested.
- Gene: We need to improve on our proactive disclosures and improve the electronic library. This is a project that is being worked on internally.

What's preventing you from committing to proactive disclosure?

- Gene: People and time to do it. Of the 15k, which is the 2nd most in DOJ, the amount of people is much less than other comparable agencies. The processors averaged 500-600 actions per person, whereas other agencies don't get that many in a full year. As they meet their statutory requirements, they try to do what they can with the resources they have.
- Monica: Public website has a lot of information on there that may not be in the Library. A lot of families find information there.
- Gene: All public statements and publications are on the central webpage. It's the proactive disclosures (mistaking this with the request of 3) that becomes difficult.
- Wilson: We can't just tell someone and point them to the website. We have to supply it to them because not everyone has access to the Internet. This is an issue directly related to the inmates.

Our assumption is that there is a lot of mail-based request because of folks inside of the facility.

- Monica: We get quite a bit of mail, but the majority of it is physical mail.
- Gene: Vast majority of those written physically are hand written. This means they must be figured out and converted.
- Wilson: Folks are writing in and requesting about other people, which requires a certification of identity. This requires an original signature. This must be mailed in and can't be a copy.

For your requests that come from other agencies, what would you say is the frequency of pointing to public information? Is it a specific research thing?

- Gene: They are attaching files related to an inmate usually and are generally not available on the web, but are generally releasable to the agency.
- Wilson: Law enforcement requests also come in and ask for a specific synopsis file. The agency is very complicated/difficult when it comes to who they get requests from. A grandma can send us a request about her grandson that is in prison and even though she could find it, we still have to mail her.

Can people contact you in wanting to know when someone is able to be freed from prison?

- Monica: Estimates of when they'll be freed is public. Where they've been held is not releasable publicly.

If you have three people that contact you about information on John Smith, are we correct in assuming that even though three people have requested this that you can't make it public.

- Gene: This is correct.
- Monica: Nice part is that it's easy to process.
- Wilson: Even staff members who want to investigate an incident must provide that certification of authorization.
- Gene: What I've noticed is that the different components aren't uniform in how certain exemptions are applied. Some components think that some data is releasable, others think it must be redacted. In referrals, information BOP wouldn't redact is redacted and vice versa.
- Jake: That's something OIP can help.

How do you get records posted online?

- Monica: It has to come from BOP to the IT office.
- Gene: Request goes to IT to post it on the web. They don't have individual ability to post or to control or change the site.

How do you decide which to post?

- Wilson: Frequently requested records. They try to keep certain updated. The food menu is a big one. Every Oct. 1st the National Food Menu is updated.

Do you receive the request by people asking a FOIA request or just a question?

- Wilson: They make a traditional FOIA request.
- Gene: Sometimes ask for recipe cards and nutritional info. Being cynical, but sometimes they get requests from inmates who want to pull their chains. You get those and you process it. Starting to get various requests for things re. DOMA and other related policies that may come down the FOIA pipeline. State, inmates, and media have an interest in these kinds of issues and that will become a place where guidance has to be granted. This is related to a Supreme Court cases and frequency of LGBTQ issues in the media. (sounds like he'd prefer to focus on these)

Has a feeling there will be more questions from intelligence reports as well.

- Wilson: One thing that could help is to limit how much a person can ask for in a legitimate FOIA request. They will get a FOIA request for 25 items within the request that forces them to look around the country. They will receive 10 requests a day from one person via mail.
- Gene: This creates a real churn because these, and checks on status, have to be accounted for individually.
- Monica: We try to aggregate.
- Gene: Inmates are now attempting to use waivers because they write for a blog.

Do you think you can create a narrative around this to show the impact of these redundant requests?

- Gene: If they don't ask for expedited treatment, every request must be treated the same. One can't be put ahead of the other.
- Jake: The thing we have to remember is that for every inmate or requester that requests 5, there are 1,000 that request 1. There are components and offices like BOP that are in the crosshairs of people with a lot of time on their hands who want to submit unnecessary requests, but many more that will just submit the one. For every repeat requester, there are many more that will only file once.
- Gene: We have 200k inmates. All it would take is each to file one request and they'd be done.
- Monica: One inmate wanted to keep requesting over and over again. The person wanted to specifically get on BOP's nerves.

Even if you put everything online for every biscuit, would this reduce the requests?

- Gene: They would just file for something else.

What bottlenecks are there in posting things online?

- Wilson: May say there is a spacing issue. It's just work to submit a request.
- Monica: Also difficult to tell what's a frequently asked document or worthy of posting.
- Wilson: Changes in policy will lead to FOIA requests.

Do you already use your library?

- Monica: Yes, we want to see if it's a public document.

What's your system like?

- Gene: Everything that's electronic goes into FOIA Xpress. Everything else that comes in via mail means people have to scan in and upload/log in that information. Everything must be treated separately. If there is no responsive email, they have to mail it back. Very cumbersome process but it has to be followed.

How often can you point them to that link to the "biscuit?"

- Monica: If they mail it, then we have to send it back via mail. If it's email, we can send it to them via email.
- Gene: They don't use that valuable Internet time to look up recipes online. They'd rather communicate. But we do get a lot of legitimate requests.

You're getting all these kinds of requests. Do you ever share logs with the requests with other components?

- Gene: We don't share with any other component because they use FOIA Xpress and BOP doesn't want the intranet to be accessible to anyone else because of the sensitive information included.
- Jake: The logs OIP posts on the site. As a proactive disclosure, OIP posts logs on all the requests they close each month.
- Gene: Have the capability to do it but don't. What they don't have is the ability for other components to get that information.
- Gene: One request; can we get an email which is everyone's name/email here. When you have the information, to facilitate through Jake if there's anything they can do to help. Would prefer to include OIP in these discussions.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

				7/31-8/4	8/7-8/11	8/14-8/18	8/21-8/25	8/28-9/1	9/4-9/8	9/11-9/15	9/18-9/22	9/25-9/29	10/2-10/6
				Sprint 1 Week 1	Sprint 2 Week 2	Sprint 3 Week 3	Sprint 3 Week 4	Sprint 3/4 Week 5	Sprint 4 Week 6	Sprint 4/5 Week 7	Sprint 5 Week 8	Sprint 5/6 Week 9	Sprint 6 Week 10
	Status	Dependencies	Team Responsible										
Integration (mail provider)	Done		Back end										
File Scanning	In Progress		Back end										
Stories 4-9: Requester experience													
Design research	Done		front end					x	x				
UX interviews	Done	Design research	front end						x	x			
Build, test, iterate	Done	UX interviews	front end							x	x		
Build, scale, iterate	Done	Build, test, iterate	front end								x	x	
Documentation	Done		front end					x	x	x	x	x	
Story 10: API (requests to agencies)													
Draft Spec	Done								x	x	x		
		API Spec story, to be clear, this is only our side of the API, it's not a complete API exchange -- other agencies would need to build software that accepts our API calls											
Build, test, iterate (based on spec work)	Done		back end						x	x	x		x
Documentation	Done		back end						x	x	x	x	x
Bug Fixing/Launch Prep													
Bug Fixing			front end/back end										
Audit													
Launch Prep			front end/back end										
Site Launch and Follow Up			front end/back end										
DOJ Activities													
ATO													
Rimcert													
C&A Team													
Tasks TBD										x	x	x	x
Planned hrs													
18F													
Product manager - Leah Bannon				32	32	32	0	32	26	32	32	32	32
Design lead - Victor Zapanta				32	32	32	24	32	26	32	32	32	32
Visual design - Aviva Askow				32	32	20	12	0	14	32	32	32	32
Content design - Ryan Sibley				32	32	32	0	32	26	32	32	32	32
Engineering lead - Aaron Borden				32	32	32	0	32	26	32	32	32	32
Front end engineer - Heather Battaglia				32	32	32	32	32	26	32	32	32	32
Sub Total				192	192	180	68	160	144	192	192	192	192

(b) (6)

DOJ													
CSS													
Total				240	232	239	123	299	283	331	267	331	331

(b) (6)

[illegible]

2/5-2/9	2/12-2/16	2/19-2/23
Site Launch	Site Launch	Site Launch
Week 28	Week 29	Week 30

(b) (6)

59.5	59.5	59.5
59.5	59.5	59.5

[illegible]

[illegible]

	8/31-11/17	11/20-11/24	11/27-12/1	12/4 - 12/8	12/11 - 12/15	12/18 - 12/22	12/25-12/29	1/2-1/6	1/8-1/12	1/15-1/19	1/22-1/26	1/29 - 2/2	2/5-2/9	2/12-2/16	2/19-2/23	2/27 - 3/1	3/8 - 3/15
	Sprint 1- 9 Development	Site Audits	Site Audits	Final UAT /File Scanning	Final UAT /File Scanning	Bug Fixing/Remediation	Bug Fixing/Remediation	Final Integration Testing	Final Integration Testing	Launch Prep	Launch Prep	Launch Prep	Launch Prep	Launch Window	Upgrade	Hold	Launch/Post Launch Support
Development																	
			File Scanning						Load Testing								
		Site Audits (Security and Performance)															
			Final UAT														
					Bug Fixing												
							Integration Testing (DNS, SSL, CDN, API), ATO, Deploy to Prod, Pre load forms)										
								CODE FREEZE 1/17									
									Launch Prep Aquia: Launch prep tasks, Training, Documentation DOJ: OMB Memo, Press Release, Access Validation, Warning Order								
							ATO 1/8								Upgrade to Drupal 8.4.5		
									OMB/ OP Email 1/12							Hold	
																	LAUNCH Thu. 3/8
																	Post Launch Support 3/8 - 3/15

[1] Dan updated time entry after 9/15. Changed from 16 to 24.

Search/Browse

- no frills google search
- search by agency
- search by topic or keyword
- search by type
- search by date range
- search in full text / title
- browse records in addition to search
- browse popular topics
- search for agency FOIA contacts
- browse by tag

Search Results

- sortable by date
- sortable by topic
- when there aren't results, suggested agency contacts
- suggested / related results
- sorted by relevance
- filter by type of document
- suggest other terms related to topic
- filter by date range
- preview of the document text
- is the document proactive or the result of FOIA request
- list or document view
- results displayed in a table

Viewing and Downloading Records

- pdf preview
- text version
- related documents
- other documents from agency
- full text view and download
- bulk download
- agency contact for finding more out about the record
- FOIA request that resulted in the record
- add to cart
- number of times this document has been viewed
- number of pages in the document
- csv preview in the browser
- multiple documents view

- reasons for the redactions or exemptions
- comments
- clicking on text and saying OCR is incorrect - crowdsourcing better text documents

Notes

- shortcuts - time is relevant
- is what's posted everything that's out there?
- latest information
- when were documents last added?
- how do i search to get to what's interesting?
- if these documents are out there, should i be writing about something else or digging deeper?
- are there documents somewhere that aren't in the search?
- the government won't easily make smoking gun documents open to the public, so i want to file anyway
- does the search engine have all the answers - what is the corpus it's searching? trust
- can i download it in text instead of pdf?
- can i do a bulk download?
- JSTOR
- Mendeley

Preliminary overview of the FOIA ecosystem has the goal to improve the FOIA process and foster an interoperable environment.

Agency facing

FOIA

Submit a FOIA request

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a federal law that gives the public the right to make requests for federal agency records. Agencies may withhold information according to nine exemptions contained in the statute. The FOIA applies only to federal agencies. It does not apply to records held by Congress, the courts, or by state or local government agencies. Each state has its own public access laws that should be consulted for access to state and local records.

U.S. Department of Commerce

First name

Last name

E-mail address

Request Description

FOIA Portal

A web interface to submit FOIA requests, get updates, and learn about FOIA.



FOIA Core

App that offers endpoints to foster interoperability in FOIA ecosystem

The diagram illustrates a web page layout. It features a header bar at the top. Below the header, the page is divided into two main sections: a sidebar on the left and a main content area on the right. The sidebar contains a vertical list of links. The main content area contains a large text block with several lines of text. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer bar.

Widely Adopted Systems

This category of tools is not well defined, but it allows for future expansion.



New Tools

These allow for assistance with optimizing the FOIA office management process.

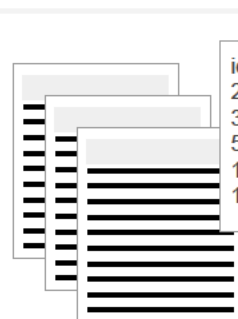
The diagram illustrates a web page layout. It features a header section at the top, a main content area in the center, and a footer section at the bottom. The main content area is divided into a sidebar on the left and a primary content column on the right. The sidebar contains a single large rectangular block, while the primary content column contains five horizontal lines representing text. The footer section is a single wide rectangular block at the bottom.

One-off systems

These are custom FOIA management tools (i.e. DOI).

Reading Room

A web interface to allow for FOIA docs/data discovery and exploration.
(with Public API)



id, agency, posted_on
23, FDA, 2014-03-02
322, GSA, 2012-03-14
567, DOI, 2011-03-21
102, DOJ, 2014-01-22
153, DOJ, 2014-09-10

Doc/data store

Collection of documents and data that is harvested and indexed.

OpenFOIA

Victor Zapanta





The FOIA request
process is broken.

What have we
heard from users?



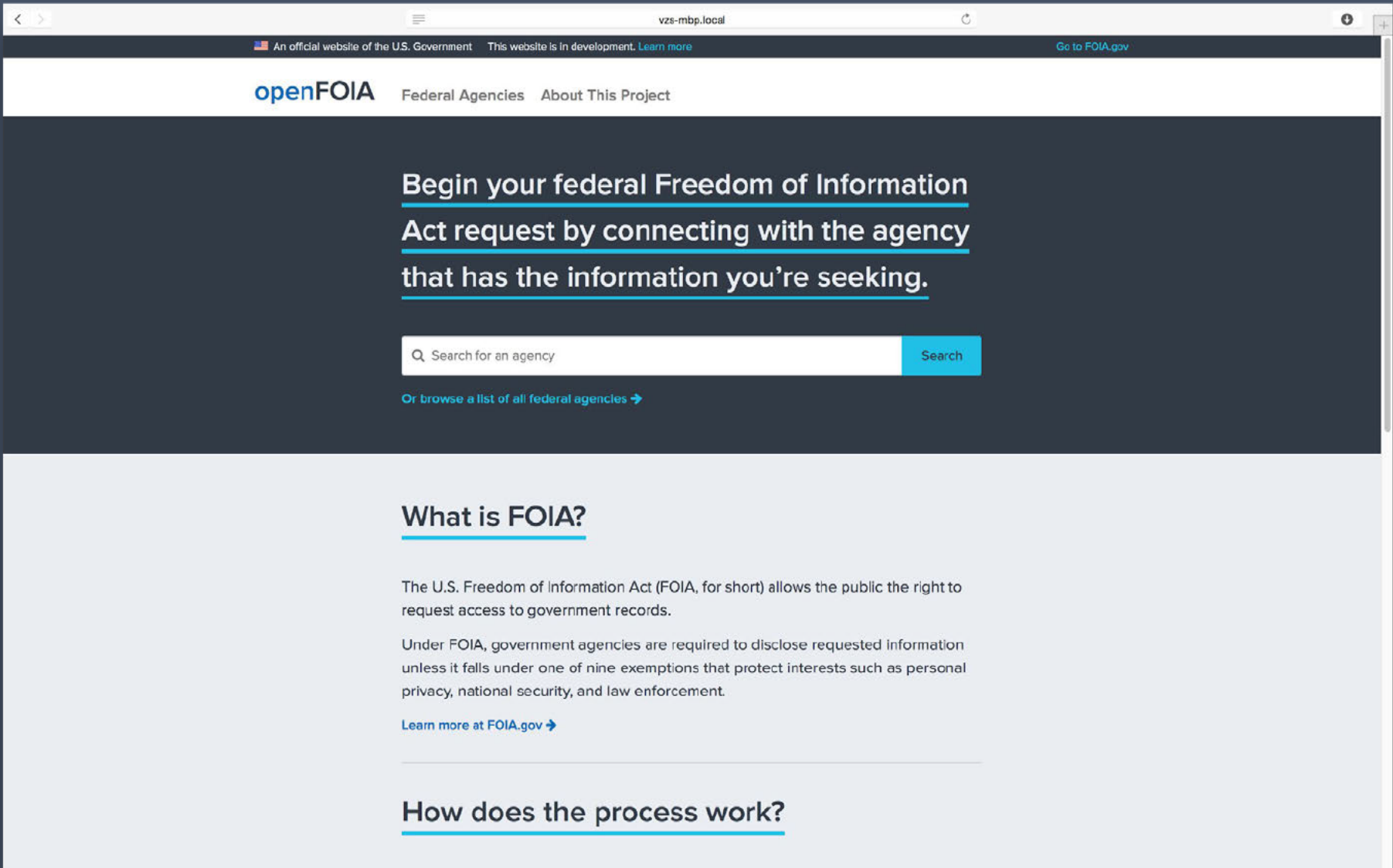
Requesters

“When I can’t **find what I’m looking for**,
I then think of making a FOIA request”

“The FOIA process feels
like a **black box**”

What can design
and technology do?

Where do I send a request?



Begin your federal Freedom of Information Act request by connecting with the agency that has the information you're seeking.

Search for an agency

Search

Or browse a list of all federal agencies →

What is FOIA?

The U.S. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA, for short) allows the public the right to request access to government records.

Under FOIA, government agencies are required to disclose requested information unless it falls under one of nine exemptions that protect interests such as personal privacy, national security, and law enforcement.


[Learn more at FOIA.gov →](#)

How does the process work?

Begin your federal Freedom of Information Act request by connecting with the agency that has the information you're seeking.

Search

Federal Bureau of Investigation

 Search for "FBI" in keywords and descriptions

What is FOIA?

The U.S. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA, for short) allows the public the right to request access to government records.

Under FOIA, government agencies are required to disclose requested information unless it falls under one of nine exemptions that protect interests such as personal privacy, national security, and law enforcement.

[Learn more at FOIA.gov](#) →

How does the process work?

vzs-mbp.local

An official website of the U.S. Government

This website is in development. [Learn more](#)

Go to FOIA.gov

openFOIA

Federal Agencies

About This Project

Q

Search

Home > Department of Justice > Federal Bureau of Investigation

Federal Bureau of Investigation

As an intelligence-driven and a threat-focused national security organization with both intelligence and law enforcement responsibilities, the mission of the FBI is to protect and defend the United States against terrorist and foreign intelligence threats, to uphold and enforce the criminal laws of the United States, and to provide leadership and criminal justice services to federal, state, municipal, and international agencies and partners.

Before you submit a FOIA request:

- Browse the agency's [FBI Headquarters FOIA Library](#), [Vault](#), or [search at FOIA.gov](#) to see if the information you're looking for is already online
- Check the [agency's website](#) for instructions on making a request

Submit a request

@

Request by email
foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov

Request by FAX
540-868-4997

Request by mail
David M. Hardy
Chief, Record/Information Dissemination Section, Records Management Division

Website
[www.fbi.gov/...](http://www.fbi.gov/)

Median processing time
17 working days for [simple requests](#) ⓘ
207 working days for [complex requests](#) ⓘ

Have questions?
[FOIA Requester Service Center](#) ⓘ
540-868-4500
[Dennis J. Argall, Public Liaison](#) ⓘ
540-868-4516

How can I find documents
that were **already released**?

THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND JOINT STAFF FOIA Requester Service Center

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OSD/JS FOIA Requests

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[FOIA Appeal](#)
[FOIA FAQs](#)
[FOIA Reference Material](#)

DoD FOIA Service Centers

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OSD/JS

[OSD/JS FOIA Library](#)
[Special Collections Library](#)
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[Recently Posted Documents](#)
[Frequently Requested Documents](#)
[OSD/JS Privacy Office](#)

DoD

[FOIA Policy Office](#)
[Annual FOIA Reports](#)
[DoD FOIA Handbook](#)
[DoD FOIA Regulation](#)
[FOIA \(a\)\(1\) Compliance](#)
[Other Sources of DoD Records](#)
[DoD Record Locator](#)
[DoD Issuances](#)
[DoD Contracts](#)
[Civilian/Military Personnel Records](#)

[Home](#) >> [OSD/JS FOIA Library](#)

Acquisition, Budget and Financial Matters

- [Selected Acquisition Reports \(SARs\)](#) [Link](#)
- [DARs Cases](#) [Link](#)

TINA REPORT TO CONGRESS

[FY 2005 \(PDF | 2.20 MB\)](#)

[FY 2006 \(PDF | 2.66 MB\)](#)

STARS AND STRIPES FINANCIAL REPORTS

EELV PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

CONSOLIDATED DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) TERRORIST RESPONSE COST REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) SUPPLEMENTAL AND COST OF WAR EXECUTION REPORT

ANNUAL REPORT ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND MILITARY EXPORTS

NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET ESTIMATES

STATEMENTS OF SECDEF ROBERT S. MCNAMARA

100 COMPANIES RECEIVING THE LARGEST DOLLAR VOLUME OF PRIME CONTRACT AWARDS

Search openFOIA's repository of 112,549
responsive records from 82 federal agencies
and departments.



Search for documents by keyword

Search


520 results for “Keystone Pipeline”

Sort by:

Relevance ▼

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Keystone XL Project

...The **Keystone XL Pipeline** (the proposed Project) is a proposed 875-mile **pipeline** project that would extend from Morgan, Montana, to Steele City, Nebraska...The **Keystone Pipeline** would allow delivery of up to 830,000 barrels per day of crude oil...approximately 327 miles of **pipeline** in Canada and approximately 875 miles in the United States...

 State Department PDF Created 1/2/2014 Released 1/2/2014


DOC-NOAA-2015-000134

...The **Keystone XL Pipeline** (the proposed Project) is a proposed 875-mile **pipeline** project that would extend from Morgan, Montana, to Steele City, Nebraska...The **Keystone Pipeline** would allow delivery of up to 830,000 barrels per day of crude oil...approximately 327 miles of **pipeline** in Canada and approximately 875 miles in the United States...

 State Department PDF Released 1/2/2014

DOC-NOAA-2015-000134

...The **Keystone XL Pipeline** (the proposed Project) is a proposed 875-mile **pipeline** project that would extend from Morgan, Montana, to Steele City, Nebraska...The **Keystone Pipeline** would allow delivery of up to 830,000 barrels per day of crude oil...approximately 327 miles of **pipeline** in Canada and approximately 875 miles in the United States...

 State Department PDF Released 1/2/2014

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Keystone XL Project

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Keystone XL Project

Executive Summary

ES.1.0 OVERVIEW OF REVIEW PROCESS

The Keystone XL Pipeline (the proposed Project) is a proposed 875-mile pipeline project that would extend from Morgan, Montana, to Steele City, Nebraska. The pipeline would allow delivery of up to 830,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil from the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin (WCSB) in Canada and the Bakken Shale Formation in the United States to Steele City, Nebraska, for onward delivery to refineries in the Gulf Coast area (see Figure ES-1). TransCanada Keystone Pipeline, LP (Keystone) has applied for a Presidential Permit that, if granted, would authorize the proposed pipeline to cross the United States-Canadian border at Morgan, Montana.

The proposed route differs from the route analyzed in the 2011 Final Environmental Impact Statement (2011 Final EIS) in that it would avoid the environmentally sensitive Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ)-identified Sand Hills Region and no longer includes a southern segment from Cushing, Oklahoma, to the Gulf Coast area.

The U.S. Department of State (the Department) prepared this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (the Supplemental EIS) to assess the potential impacts associated with the proposed Project and its alternatives. The Supplemental EIS takes into consideration over 400,000 comments received during the scoping period and 1.5 million comments received on the Draft Supplemental EIS issued in March 2013. Notable changes since the Draft Supplemental EIS include:

- Expanded analysis of potential oil releases;
- Expanded climate change analysis;
- Updated oil market analysis incorporating new economic modeling; and
- Expanded analysis of rail transport as part of the No Action Alternative scenarios.

ES.1.1 Presidential Permit Process

To make this decision (i.e., the National Interest Determination), the Secretary of State, through the Department, considers many factors, including energy security; environmental, cultural, and economic impacts; foreign policy; and compliance with relevant state and federal regulations. This Supplemental EIS was produced consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and will help inform that determination. Before making such a decision, the Department also asks for the views of eight federal agencies identified in EO 13337: the Departments of Energy, Defense, Transportation, Homeland Security, Justice, Interior, and Commerce, as well as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

If the proposed Project is determined to serve the national interest, it will be granted a Presidential Permit that authorizes the construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of the facilities at the border between the United States and Canada. The applicant would be required to abide by certain conditions listed in this Supplemental EIS and the Presidential Permit. The Department's primary role is to make a National Interest Determination. Its jurisdiction does not include selection of specific pipeline routes within the United States.

In addition, the Department acts consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as part of its comprehensive NEPA consistent review.

ES.1.2 Background

Keystone's first application for the Keystone XL pipeline was submitted on September 19, 2008, and a Final EIS was published on August 26, 2011. The route proposed included the same U.S.-Canada border crossing as the currently proposed Project but a different pipeline route in the United States. The 2011 Final EIS route traversed a substantial portion of the Sand Hills Region of Nebraska, as identified by the NDEQ. Moreover, the 2011 Final EIS route went from Montana to Steele City, Nebraska, and then from Cushing, Oklahoma, to the Gulf Coast area.

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Agency: State Department
[FOIA Contact](#)

Format: PDF, 21 pages

Created: 1/7/2001

Released: 1/2/2014


520 results for “Keystone Pipeline”

Sort by:

Relevance ▼

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Keystone XL Project

...The **Keystone XL Pipeline** (the proposed Project) is a proposed 875-mile **pipeline** project that would extend from Morgan, Montana, to Steele City, Nebraska...The **Keystone Pipeline** would allow delivery of up to 830,000 barrels per day of crude oil...approximately 327 miles of **pipeline** in Canada and approximately 875 miles in the United States...

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DOC-NOAA-2015-000134

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Q Keystone Pipeline

Search

Filter by Agency:

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520 results for “Keystone Pipeline”

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1-10 of 520 Documents

Want to improve **FOIA**?

Email us! 18f-foia@gsa.gov

Contribute. It's all open source!
github.com/18F/foia-hub

Information	Notes	How often is it collected?	Do we collect it?	Displayed on Hub?	Where does it come from?	What format?
Exemptions used in denying a FOIA request	Organized by authorizing statute, the type of information withheld, case citation, agency or component that uses the exemption, and the number of times it has been applied by the agency overall.	Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Received, processed, and pending FOIA requests	Collected by number of requests pending as of the start of the year, number of requests received that year, number of requests processed, and number of requests pending at the end of the year.	Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Disposition of processed FOIA requests		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
"Other" reasons for "full denials" based on reasons other than exemptions		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Number of time extensions applied to processing requested		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Administrative appeals received, processed, and pending		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Disposition of all processed appeals		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Number of time extensions applied to appeals		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Reasons for denial of appeal (other than exemptions)		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
"Other" reasons for denial of appeal		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Response time for appeals		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Ten oldest pending appeals		Annually	Not collected	Not displayed	Chief FOIA Officer Annual Reports	Contained in PDF and XML docs here: http://www.justice.gov/oip/chief-foia-officer-reports-2013
Request Processing Times						
Average Processing Time						

Survey rollout plan

In order to gather the FOIA requirements for perfection, we are rolling out a survey to all 116 agencies. Our intention is to use a rolling release of the survey so we can iterate on it as we get feedback from agencies.

Week 1 (8/21)

Tested form with 3 agencies, moved from Excel to Google docs.

Week 2 (8/28)

- Test form with 3 remaining partner agencies and Matt
- Drafted email to be sent widely. Complete instructions to context set for the experience.
- Ask OIP for 10 agencies that could access Google form last time. Send form to 10 more test agencies. Ask for this group of 10 to reach out if they'd be willing to let us observe as they fill out the survey.
- Clarify non-Google form option w OIP.
- Start front stage content
 - [pull in stuff]

Issues

- Test agency form builder with partners
 - Test form with 3 remaining partner agencies
 - Test form with Matt
- Write email with instructions for agencies
 - We need fast response
 - We'd like to observe if possible
 - Talk to Matt & Victor about how to handle agencies with sub-components
 - Tell them we can send them xls if they can't access the google form
- Scale agency form builder to more agencies
 - Get list of 10 agencies who are likely to get back to us fast from OIP and who didn't have problems with the google form
 - Send email to them and ask if they'd be willing to let us observe
- Spike: Start front stage content

- Landing page
- Confirmation page

Week 3 (9/4)

Look at results from 10 agencies, validate that agencies are filling out the form properly (i.e. including all fields needed for a perfect FOIA, possibly all “nice-to-have” fields.) Follow up with any agencies who haven’t responded.

Week 4 (9/11)

(10 agencies completed)

Send form to 20 more agencies.

Week 5 (9/18)

(30 agencies completed)

Send form to 30 more agencies. Send survey to 6 partners as well.

Week 5 (9/25)

(60 agencies completed)

Send form to 56 remaining agencies.

Week 5 (10/2)

Target completion: 116 agencies completed

Repository Clean Up

Problem Statement

The 'foia' repository contains the data we'll use for our project. It currently also contains a number of other directories which aren't used very much right now (that look like they contain prototype code and exploratory documentation). This is confusing and not obvious and clear to someone looking at our repositories from outside team, and more importantly outside 18F.

Since the foia repository has fast become mostly about the data, I'd like to separate the data parts from the prototype directories to keep things as clear as possible to someone who is looking at this from the outside.

Solution

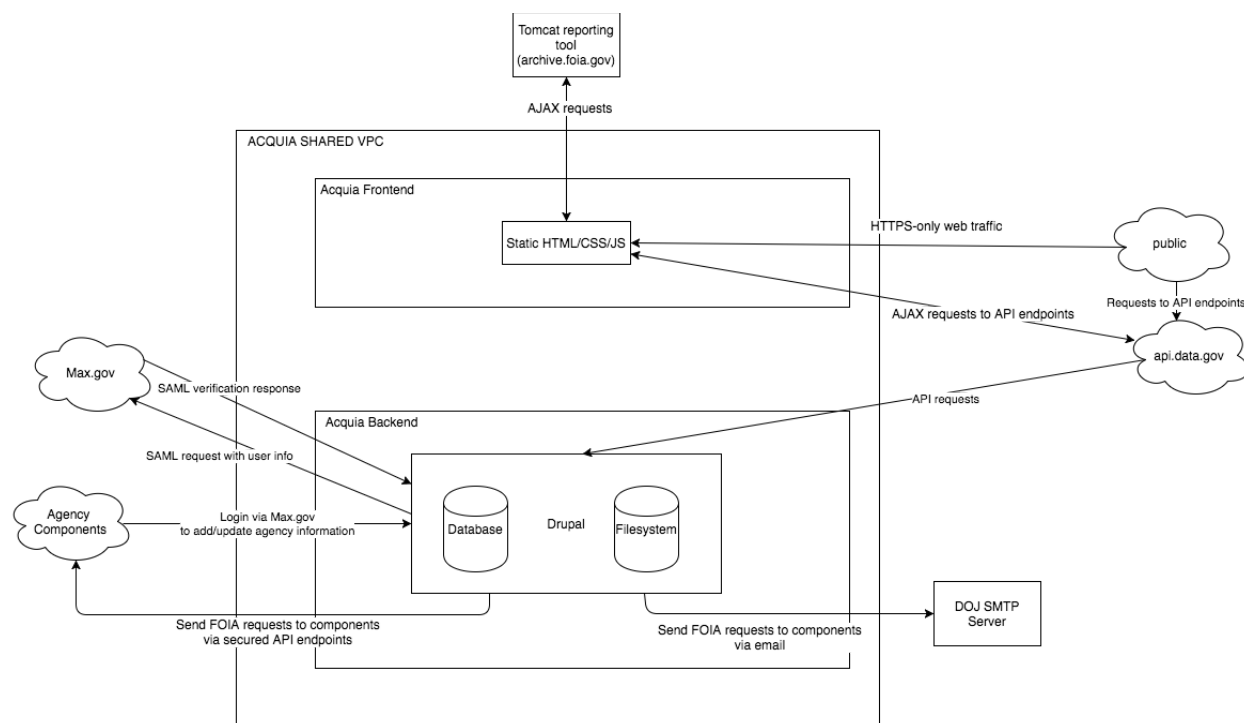
1. Move contacts/data to a new repository called foia-data.
2. Remove contacts/data from foia.
3. Add in more documentation around the foia repository to make it more useful. Here is a sample github pages site I wrote that demonstrates this: <http://khandelwal.github.io/foia/>

System Architecture

National FOIA Portal Backend

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Overview



The general architecture consists of a headless Drupal backend (Acquia Backend in figure above) and a static Jekyll and React JavaScript frontend (Acquia Frontend in figure above). The backend, which is the focus of this document, is a Drupal 8 application built by leveraging the BLT toolset to automate development, testing, and deployment on Acquia Cloud Enterprise. Code is open source and available at <https://github.com/usdoj/foia-api>. The frontend is also hosted on Acquia Cloud Enterprise and source code is open at <https://github.com/usdoj/foia.gov>.

The back and frontend each have their own subscription and docroot on ACE, but share hardware. Interactions with the backend APIs happen through `https://api.foia.gov/api`, which resolves to `api.data.gov` servers. This allows us to utilize their free rate limiting and key provisioning services for government websites. They then forward those requests off to origin at `https://api2.foia.gov/api`, where Varnish was configured to only accept requests coming from `api.data.gov` by whitelisting their IPs.

In terms of the content model, government agencies exist in Drupal as taxonomy terms, and components within those agencies exist as nodes. The data was populated via migration from a set of JSON files.

Government agencies are able to login to the Drupal site at `https://admin.foia.gov` by way of SAML authentication, with MAX.gov as the IdP to modify said data (which is essentially a set of contact information).

The site's main use case is that a user will visit the frontend at www.foia.gov, perform a search for an agency component in a type ahead search box (against the exposed JSON API endpoint served by the backend), click on the component they're searching for (with the page being rendered with additional info from JSON API), click 'start request' (with the form being generated from info from JSON API), fill out the request form, and submit it (to a custom endpoint on the backend using Drupal core's rest module and webform).

The Drupal backend validates the attempted submission and returns any errors to the frontend to render for the user to correct. If there are no errors, a webform submission is saved, a corresponding FOIA request created and placed into a queue, and the webform submission ID returned for the user's records. A scheduled task is setup on ACE to run every 10 minutes, for 20 seconds at a time, to claim requests from the queue, and send them off to agencies via API or email. Two additional tasks also run every 10 minutes, one to perform virus scanning on files attached to requests, and another to queue requests that are deemed clean after virus scanning.

Migration

At the outset of developing the National FOIA Portal a migration was performed from a given set of json files at <https://github.com/18F/2015-foia/tree/master/contacts/data>. Each file contained top-level government agency information along with information on the components within it. A Drupal migration was written which extracted the agency, agency component, and personnel data from the JSON files and brought them into system. The scripts were written such that should new data become available, migrations can be run as per the README file in the FOIA Migrate module to pull in the data. This may be of interest particularly for the “processing data” that lives on each agency component in the system.

Authentication

Login is designed to happen through Single Sign On using the MAX.gov Identity Provider PIV or CAC card option. Configuration documentation is in [the General System Maintenance document under the Single Sign On heading](#). The SimpleSAMLphp library is used by way of the `simplesamlphp_auth` module to enable Drupal as a service provider.

Component

Once authenticated, agency managers can update migrated information for their agency and the components thereof. Details of updating those entities are in [the content management document](#).

Webform

There is a webform template that defines most of the elements that most agencies will want or need for their forms. From this template Agency Administrators create webforms for each agency component that can be customized to accommodate any needs or wants particular to the component. After webforms are created, they are associated with agency components by an Agency Administrator.

Submissions

In order to know what fields are available for a form, the front end queries the backend through api.data.gov to retrieve elements for the webform. Once the webform elements are known, they are used to create and post a submission via the API. Full API documentation can be found at <https://stg-www.foia.gov/developer/> before launch or <https://www.foia.gov/developer/> after launch.

FOIA Requests

After a webform submission is saved a correlating FOIA Request entity is created. This entity references the submission. If it does not have any files attached it is queued for submission. If it does have files attached it will not be queued for submission until all files have been scanned. This is done by the “Queue Scanned Requests for Submission” scheduled job which runs every ten minutes on the 8s. This runs the custom “queue clean requests” drush command that sets the status of the FOIA request depending on the presence and virus scan status of files.

Queue

The FOIA Submissions Drupal database queue has been configured to be processed every 10 minutes on the 0s via the “Process FOIA Requests” scheduled job on Acquia Cloud. Processing involves determining the recipient agency component for the request and sending the request to the component according to their submission preference (Email or API). If submission succeeds, the request status is set to “Submitted to component” and the webform submission is deleted. If it fails in sending to the agency (API) or DOJ’s SMTP server (email) the status is set to “Failed submission to component”.

FOIA Submissions

The foia_submissions queue contains FOIA requests that are ready to be submitted to an agency component via email or API. If there are no attachments with a request, they are added

to the queue upon submission. If there are attachments, requests are only added to the queue upon scanning of all attached files. Requests are created by a webform handler titled “FoiaSubmissionQueueHandler”. This handler is added to a webform upon creation, and is invoked upon webform submission. The “FOIASubmissionQueueWorker” class within the custom foia_webform module is responsible for claiming requests from the queue, determining the component to submit to and the submission preference (email vs API), and leveraging the custom email or API service to send off the request. Requests that are successfully submitted are deleted from the portal system, attachments and all. If a submission fails it remains in the system, but is removed from the queue. The system does not currently retry failed requests. The reason for failure (if available) is included in the FOIA request.

API

The API submission option sends FOIA request contents to an agency component API via an http POST request . Documentation for the Agency API is located at <https://stg-www.foia.gov/developer/agency-api/> before launch or <https://www.foia.gov/developer/agency-api/> after launch.

Email

The email submission option sends FOIA request contents to an agency component via email via DOJ’s SMTP servers. It formats the request contents into a table, and sends the email to the submission email address specified on the agency component node.

Virus Scanning

A File entity is created for each file attachment that is included with a FOIA request. These entities assume a status of “Scan” upon creation, indicating that the referenced file needs to be scanned for viruses. When one or more files are attached to a webform submission, the FOIA Request entity “Virus scan status” field is set to “Pending virus scan”. Each of the files will go through the virus scanning process until each file is either marked as clean or marked as having a virus and deleted. This process is initiated by the “Virus Scan and File Update” scheduled job, which is scheduled to run every 10 minutes on the 5s. This task calls a drush command, which invokes the scanning of all files that were attached to FOIA requests using Clam AntiVirus. ClamAV returns a status for each file as “OK”, “Empty file”, or “Removed.”

The raw results are parsed by the drush command to retrieve the result for each file. If the output of the scan file is “OK” or “Empty file”, the corresponding file entity status is set to clean. If the output of the scan file is “Removed.” the file on the file system is deleted and the file entity status is set to virus. Once all of the files attached to a webform have a status of clean or virus, the request status is changed to “Queued for submission”, and the FOIA Request entity can be queued by the “Queue Scanned Requests for Submission” cron job.

Tests

Because there is no CI (continuous integration) solution in place, the team standard has been for developers to run automated tests prior to submitting pull requests and as part of code review. Tests are also run prior to deployments. Tests can be run using the BLT command: `blt tests:all` or a subset of tests may be run by executing the `blt tests:behat` or `blt tests:phpunit` commands.

Behat

Custom Steps

Custom steps are defined in the `tests/behat/features/bootstrap/Drupal/FeatureContext.php` class. These steps include visiting the edit or delete path for a given entity, deleting or viewing a user, and cleaning up taxonomy terms that were created for testing purposes by deleting them. It's also possible to store a path and then visit that path later in a scenario. There's a custom step to create a webform, go to an entity with a label of a certain type, and check if a radio button is selected or not.

Features

Functional tests are broken up into roles, entities, and configuration. The Administrator feature refers to the Agency Administrator role. Likewise, the Manager feature tests the Agency Manager role permissions. Both Personnel and Request entities have behat features. There is also a general Configuration feature, in addition to a Saml feature that is just for Single Sign On with SimpleSAMLPHP Authorization.

PHPUnit

Unit tests exist within the FOIA Request and FOIA Webform custom modules. The request tests extend `EntityKernelTestBase` and the webform tests extend `KernelTestBase`. The request tests validate that the set and get methods return the expected status and that an unexpected status defaults to queued. Webform tests are significantly more involved.

Webform tests have a couple of traits, the first of which can be used to install fields on entities with storage aptly named `FieldInstalTrait`. The second is a reflection trait that enables the testing of private and protected methods.

Views

File Entity Files

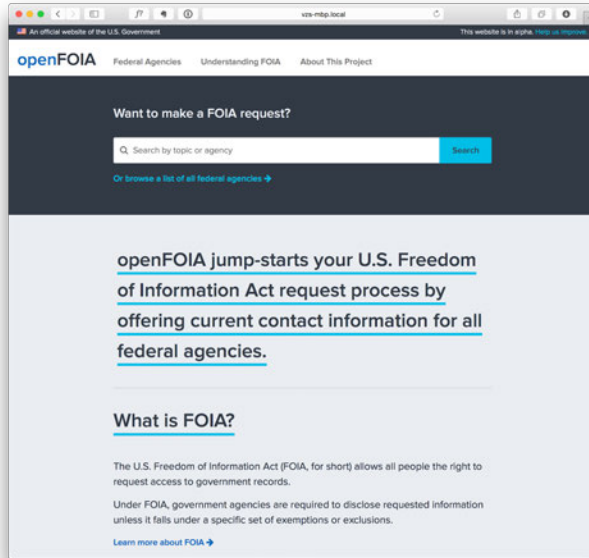
The File Entity contrib module provides a view that appears as a tab in the content administration section.

FOIA Requests

A custom FOIA Requests view has also been located as a tab in the content administration section in the UI. This enables a user to see the requests along with statuses. Additional information can be viewed by clicking on the ID link of an individual request. There are filters for ID, Status, Agency, Component, and submission method. As such this can be a way to discover what is or has happened with requests in the system.

openFOIA

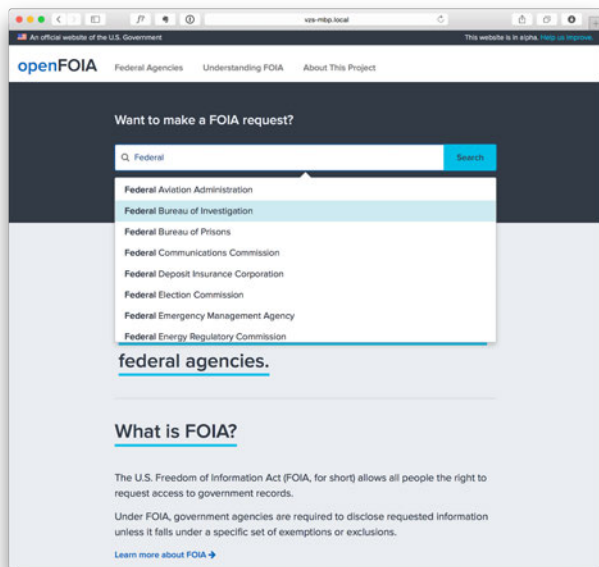
Home page



Notes

- Do users scroll to the lower content on this page? [p1]
- How often do users click the other page links? [p1]

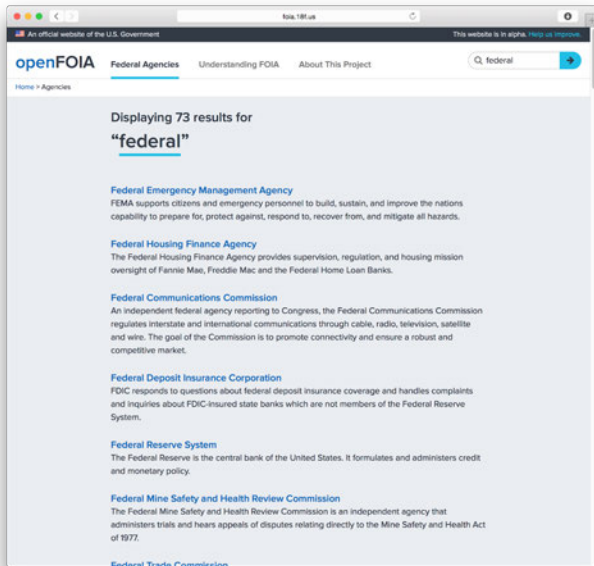
Home page (typeahead)



Notes

- What are users searching?
- How often do users click a typeahead suggestion? [p1]
- How often do users hit enter to search? [p1]
- How often do users click the search button? [p1]

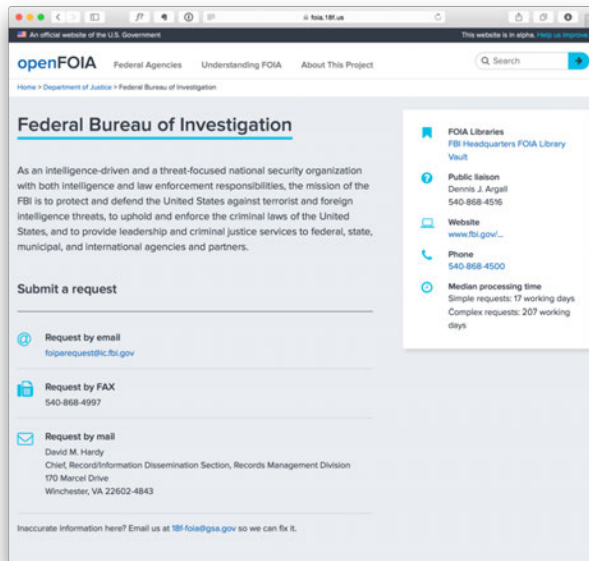
Search results



Notes

- Do users scroll through search results?
- What position are clicked the most? [optional]
- How often do users search or hit back from this page? [p1]

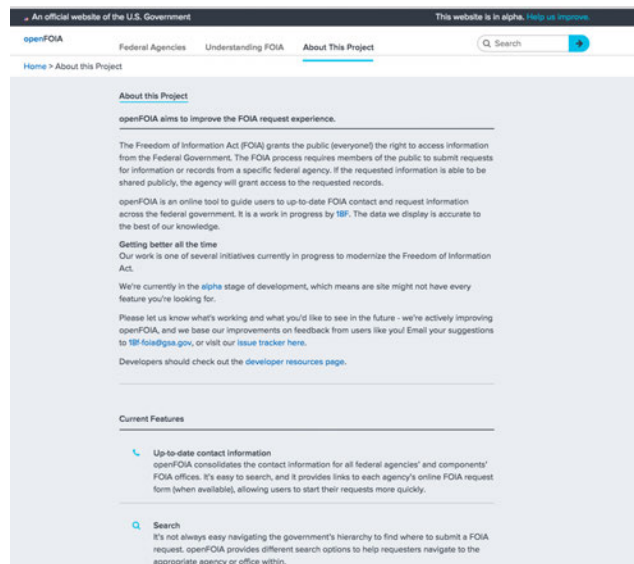
Agency landing page



Notes

- How often do users click [request by email, FOIA libraries, website] link? [p1]
- How often do users click [request by email, FOIA libraries, website] across all landing pages?
- How long do users stay on the landing page?
- [This is an attempt at identifying whether or not users came to the right place.]
- How often do users click on the inaccurate info link?
- How often do users use the small search results bar from this page? [This for all views]

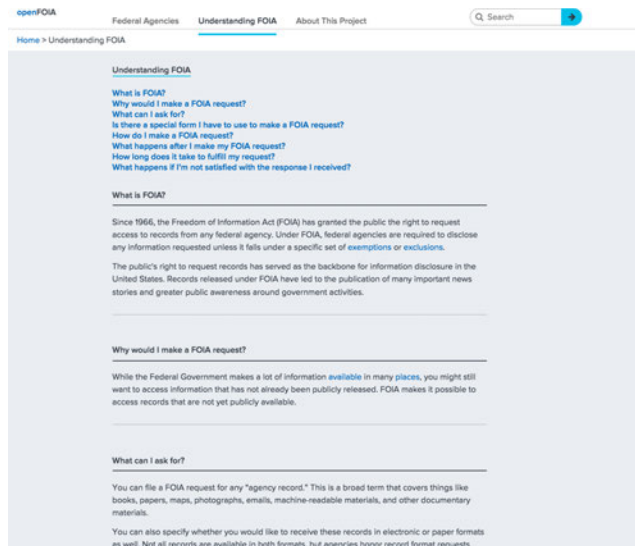
About the project



Notes

-Do users scroll?

Understanding FOIA

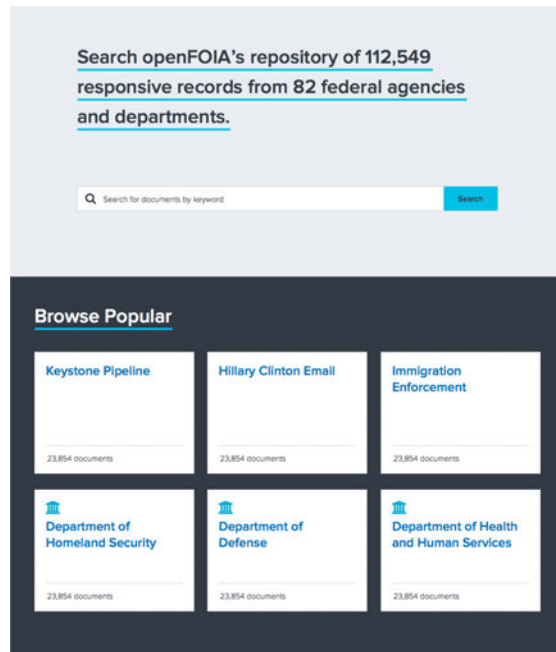


Notes

-Do users scroll?

Krang

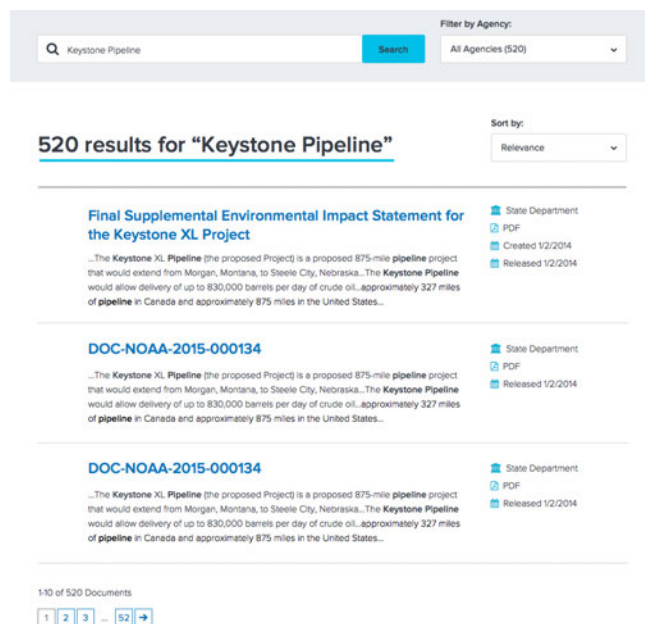
Home page



Notes

- What do users search? [ready]
- What percentage of users scroll down to the bottom of the screen? [add tracker]
- What percentage of users click on the browse popular links? [ready]
- Which “popular” position gets clicked on the most? [add tracker]
- Which “popular” button gets clicked the most (by topic)? [add tracker and topics]
- How often do users click on underlined text that is **not** a hyperlink? [add trackers]

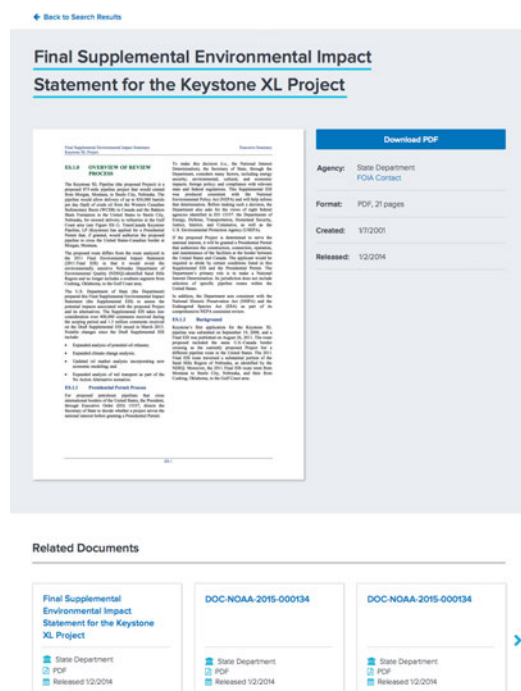
Search page



Notes

- What are users searching? [ready]
- Detailed breakdown of number of search results users are receiving. [event tracker / custom]
 - How often do users receive < [threshold] results for their query?
 - The above will be very important to allow us to assess the quality +size of our database
- What percentage of users are using agency filters? [add ga event tracker]
- How often do users sort? [add ga event tracker]
- How often do users scroll to the bottom of a page? [add ga event tracker]
- How often do users navigate through the pages (bottom pagination)? [add ga event tracker]
- How often do users click through to a record landing page? [ready]
- How many search results do users go through
 - This will help us assess the UX of reading multiple documents.

Record landing page



Notes

- How many views on this record?
 - How many views on all records? [ready]
 - How many views on all records with this topic (assuming we have topics or tags)
 - How many views for all records from this agency?
 - [if we choose to have the agency in the url it would be easier]
- What percentage of users click on a related record? [ready]
 - What percentage of users use the related records navigation arrow? [add tracker]

- How might we assess the quality of the related records?
 - What percentage of users click a related record *and* download the document?
 - What is the bounce rate of users after they click a related record?
- What percentage of users download the record? [add ga event tracker]
- What percentage of users view a PDF in the viewer (assuming we build in viewer)
- Nice to have: comparing these behaviors on mobile vs desktop. [ready]
- How many users go to contacts?

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
Administrative Conference of the United States	ACUS	Administrative Conference of the United States	26
AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION	ABMC	AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION	5
Armed Forces Retirement Home	AFRH	Armed Forces Retirement Home	13
Broadcasting Board of Governors	BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors	45
Central Intelligence Agency	CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	2463
Commission of Fine Arts	CFA	Commission of Fine Arts	0
Committee For Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled	CPPBSD	Committee For Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled	6
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	CFTC	Commodity Futures Trading Commission	228
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	CFPB	Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	318
Corporation for National and Community Service	CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service	47
Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency	CIGIE	Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency	15
Council on Environmental Quality	CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality	83
Court Services Offender Supervision Agency	CSOSA	Court Services Offender Supervision Agency	532
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	DNFSB	Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	19
Department of the Army	ARMY	Department of Defense	29616
National Security Agency	NSA	Department of Defense	1766
National Reconnaissance Office	NRO	Department of Defense	164
U.S. Central Command	CENTCOM	Department of Defense	272
Defense Logistics Agency	DLA	Department of Defense	3806
Department of the Navy	Navy	Department of Defense	9331
Defense Health Agency	DHA	Department of Defense	123
Defense Intelligence Agency	DIA	Department of Defense	847
Department of Defense Educational Activity	DoDEA	Department of Defense	62
Department of the Air Force	AF	Department of Defense	5975
National Geospatial Intelligence Agency	NGA	Department of Defense	100
Office of the Secretary of Defense/Joint Staff	OSD/JS	Department of Defense	1802
Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals	ASBCA	Department of Defense	19
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Department of Defense Inspector General	DoD IG	Department of Defense	952
U.S. Southern Command	SOUTHCOM	Department of Defense	198
U.S. Special Operations Command	SOCOM	Department of Defense	281
OM - Office of the Chief Privacy Officer	OM-OCPO	Department of Education	215
Department of Education	ED	Department of Education	2297
Federal Student Aid	FSA	Department of Education	223
Institute of Education Sciences	IES	Department of Education	32
Multiple Office Assigned	M	Department of Education	178
OCFO-Contracts and Acquisitions Management	OCFO-CAM	Department of Education	40
OCR District of Columbia	OCR-Metro D.C.	Department of Education	79
OCR Region I - Boston	OCR-1 Boston	Department of Education	82
OCR Region II - New York	OCR-2 New York	Department of Education	143
OCR Region III - Philadelphia	OCR-3 Philade	Department of Education	83

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
OCR Region IV - Atlanta	OCR-4 Atlanta	Department of Education	65
OCR Region IX - San Francisco	OCR-9 San Francisco	Department of Education	66
OCR Region V - Chicago	OCR-5 Chicago	Department of Education	144
OCR Region VI - Dallas	OCR-6 Dallas	Department of Education	105
OCR Region VII - Kansas City	OCR-7 Kansas City	Department of Education	37
OCR Region VIII - Denver	OCR-8 Denver	Department of Education	46
OCR Region X - Seattle	OCR-10 Seattle	Department of Education	75
OCR Region XII - Cleveland	OCR-12 Cleveland	Department of Education	30
Office for Civil Rights (Headquarters)	OCR	Department of Education	160
Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education	OCTAE	Department of Education	1
Office of Communication and Outreach	OCO	Department of Education	2
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	OESE	Department of Education	70
Office of Innovation and Improvement	OII	Department of Education	60
Office of Inspector General	OIG	Department of Education	59
Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs	OLCA	Department of Education	2
Office of Management	OM	Department of Education	45
Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development	OPEPD	Department of Education	4
Office of Postsecondary Education	OPE	Department of Education	162
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	OSERS	Department of Education	48
Office of the Chief Financial Officer	OCFO	Department of Education	5
Office of the Chief Information Officer	OCIO	Department of Education	4
Office of the Deputy Secretary	ODS	Department of Education	4
Office of the General Counsel	OGC	Department of Education	4
Office of the Secretary	OS	Department of Education	20
Office of the Under Secretary	OUS	Department of Education	2
Department of Energy	DOE	Department of Energy	2353
Bonneville Power Administration	BPA	Department of Energy	105
Carlsbad Field Office	CBFO	Department of Energy	21
Chicago Office	CH	Department of Energy	80
Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center	EMCBC	Department of Energy	77
Golden Field Office	GFO	Department of Energy	111
Headquarters	HQ	Department of Energy	1073
Idaho Operations Office	ID	Department of Energy	47
National Energy Technology Laboratory	NETL	Department of Energy	25
National Nuclear Security Administration	NNSA	Department of Energy	302
Naval Reactors Laboratory Field Office	NRLFO	Department of Energy	2
Oak Ridge Office	ORO	Department of Energy	209
Office of Scientific and Technical Information	OSTI	Department of Energy	40
Richland Operations Office	ROO	Department of Energy	98
Savannah River Office	SRO	Department of Energy	49
Southeastern Power Administration	SEPA	Department of Energy	24
Southwestern Power Administration	SWPA	Department of Energy	22
Strategic Petroleum Reserve	SPR	Department of Energy	18
Western Area Power Administration	WAPA	Department of Energy	50
Administration for Community Living	ACL	Department of Health and Human Services	11
Food and Drug Administration	FDA	Department of Health and Human Services	9958
Health Resources and Services Administration	HRSA	Department of Health and Human Services	379
Indian Health Service	IHS	Department of Health and Human Services	149
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	Department of Health and Human Services	1276
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	SAMHSA	Department of Health and Human Services	175
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services	CMS	Department of Health and Human Services	26566
National Institutes of Health	NIH	Department of Health and Human Services	1273
Administration for Children and Families	ACF	Department of Health and Human Services	850
Center for Disease Control and Prevention	CDC	Department of Health and Human Services	1020
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health	OASH	Department of Health and Human Services	357
Office of the Secretary	OS	Department of Health and Human Services	1071
Department of Health and Human Services	HHS	Department of Health and Human Services	43085

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
Department of Housing & Urban Development	HUD	Department of Housing & Urban Development	2218
Atlanta Regional Office (Atlanta, Birmingham, Caribbean, Columbia, Greensboro, Jackson, Jacksonville, Knoxville, Louisville, Nashville, Memphis, Miami, Orlando, Tampa)	R04	Department of Housing & Urban Development	213
Boston Regional Office (Boston, Hartford, Manchester, Providence)	R01	Department of Housing & Urban Development	83
Chicago Regional Office (Chicago, Columbus, Cleveland, Detroit, Annapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul)	R05	Department of Housing & Urban Development	103
Denver Regional Office (Denver)	R08	Department of Housing & Urban Development	79
Ft. Worth Regional Office (Ft. Worth, Albuquerque, Houston, Little Rock, New Orleans, Oklahoma, San Antonio)	R06	Department of Housing & Urban Development	93
HQ-Headquarters	HQ	Department of Housing & Urban Development	1000
Kansas City Regional Office (Kansas City, Des Moines, Omaha, St. Louis)	R07	Department of Housing & Urban Development	35
New York Regional Office (New York, Albany, Buffalo, Camden, Newark, Syracuse)	R02	Department of Housing & Urban Development	101
OIG - Office of the Inspector General	OIG	Department of Housing & Urban Development	129
Philadelphia Regional Office (Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Washington, DC, Charleston, Wilmington)	R03	Department of Housing & Urban Development	142
San Francisco Regional Office (San Francisco, Honolulu, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Reno, Santa Ana)	R09	Department of Housing & Urban Development	199
Seattle Regional Office (Seattle, Anchorage, Portland)	R0X	Department of Housing & Urban Development	41
Criminal Division	Criminal	Department of Justice	796
Environment and Natural Resources Division	ENRD	Department of Justice	106
Federal Bureau of Investigation	FBI	Department of Justice	12931
Justice Management Division	JMD	Department of Justice	116
Civil Division	Civil	Department of Justice	306
Executive Office for United States Attorneys	EOUSA	Department of Justice	3821
Office of Information Policy	OIP	Department of Justice	852
Bureau of Prisons	BOP	Department of Justice	8004
Civil Rights Division	Civil Rights	Department of Justice	605
Drug Enforcement Administration	DEA	Department of Justice	1675
Office of Justice Programs	OJP	Department of Justice	413
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	Department of Justice	330
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	ATF	Department of Justice	1465
Office on Violence Against Women	OVW	Department of Justice	104
Foreign Claims Settlement Commission	FCSC	Department of Justice	39
United States Marshals Service	USMS	Department of Justice	1996
United States National Central Bureau - INTERPOL	USNCB	Department of Justice	207
Executive Office for United States Trustees	EOUST	Department of Justice	96
Office of Legal Counsel	OLC	Department of Justice	111
Executive Office for Immigration Review	EOIR	Department of Justice	31513
Executive Office for Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces	OCDETF	Department of Justice	62
Office of the Pardon Attorney	Pardon Attorne	Department of Justice	91
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services	COPS	Department of Justice	88
Antitrust Division	Antitrust	Department of Justice	121
Community Relations Service	CRS	Department of Justice	19
Department of Justice	DOJ	Department of Justice	67783
National Security Division	NSD	Department of Justice	198
Office of Legal Policy	OLP	Department of Justice	83
Office of Legislative Affairs	OLA	Department of Justice	134
Office of Professional Responsibility	OPR	Department of Justice	115
Office of Public Affairs	Public Affairs	Department of Justice	64
Office of the Associate Attorney General	Office of the As	Department of Justice	112
Office of the Attorney General	Office of the A	Department of Justice	311
Office of the Deputy Attorney General	Office of the D	Department of Justice	206
Office of the Solicitor General	OSG	Department of Justice	107
Professional Responsibility Advisory Office	PRAO	Department of Justice	31
Tax Division	Tax	Department of Justice	136
United States Parole Commission	USPC	Department of Justice	419
Internal Revenue Service	IRS	Department of the Treasury	10197
Alcohol Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau	TTB	Department of the Treasury	108
Bureau of Engraving and Printing	BEP	Department of the Treasury	82
Bureau of the Fiscal Service	Fiscal Service	Department of the Treasury	327
Departmental Offices	DO	Department of the Treasury	771
Financial Crimes Enforcement Network	FinCEN	Department of the Treasury	392

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
United States Mint	MINT	Department of the Treasury	95
Office of the Comptroller of the Currency	OCC	Department of the Treasury	1638
Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration	TIGTA	Department of the Treasury	312
Department of the Treasury	Treasury	Department of the Treasury	13922
Federal Aviation Administration	FAA	Department of Transportation	9636
Federal Highway Administration	FHWA	Department of Transportation	361
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration	FMCSA	Department of Transportation	1510
Federal Railroad Administration	FRA	Department of Transportation	535
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	Department of Transportation	103
Office of the Secretary of Transportation	OST	Department of Transportation	366
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration	PHMSA	Department of Transportation	187
Maritime Administration	MARAD	Department of Transportation	105
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	NHTSA	Department of Transportation	262
Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation	SLSDC	Department of Transportation	28
Department of Transportation	DOT	Department of Transportation	13374
Federal Transit Administration	FTA	Department of Transportation	281
Board of Veterans Appeals	BVA	Department of Veterans Affairs	29
Office of Acquisition and Logistics	OAL	Department of Veterans Affairs	330
Office of Resolution Management	ORM	Department of Veterans Affairs	39
Veterans Health Administration	VHA	Department of Veterans Affairs	25525
Congressional and Legislative Affairs	C&LA	Department of Veterans Affairs	48
Construction and Facilities Management	CFM	Department of Veterans Affairs	71
Department of Veterans Affairs	VA	Department of Veterans Affairs	29715
General Counsel	GC	Department of Veterans Affairs	121
Human Resource Management	HRM	Department of Veterans Affairs	36
Inspector General	IG	Department of Veterans Affairs	526
National Cemetery Administration	NCA	Department of Veterans Affairs	59
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	ODI	Department of Veterans Affairs	2
Office of Information Technology	OIT	Department of Veterans Affairs	219
Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization	OSDBU	Department of Veterans Affairs	27
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources & Administration	OASHRA	Department of Veterans Affairs	7
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Management	Mgmt	Department of Veterans Affairs	29
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public & Intergovernmental Affairs	OASP&IA	Department of Veterans Affairs	8
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration	Admin	Department of Veterans Affairs	9
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs	ODASIA	Department of Veterans Affairs	18
Office of the Secretary	SEC	Department of Veterans Affairs	98
Operations, Security, and Preparedness	OSP	Department of Veterans Affairs	5
Policy and Planning	P&P	Department of Veterans Affairs	4
Public Affairs	PA	Department of Veterans Affairs	13
Veterans Benefits Administration	VBA	Department of Veterans Affairs	2492
Export-Import Bank of the United States	Ex-Im Bank	Export-Import Bank of the United States	100
Headquarters	HQ	Export-Import Bank of the United States	94
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	Export-Import Bank of the United States	6
Farm Credit Administration	FCA	Farm Credit Administration	41
Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation	FCSIC	Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation	11
Federal Communications Commission	FCC	Federal Communications Commission	785
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	630
Federal Election Commission	FEC	Federal Election Commission	91
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION	FERC	FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION	131
Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council	FFIEC	Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council	23
Federal Housing Finance Agency	FHFA	Federal Housing Finance Agency	170
Federal Housing Finance Agency Headquarters	FHFA-HQ	Federal Housing Finance Agency	78
Federal Housing Finance Agency Office of Inspector General	FHFA-OIG	Federal Housing Finance Agency	92
Federal Labor Relations Authority	Authority	Federal Labor Relations Authority	60
Atlanta Regional Office	ATRO	Federal Labor Relations Authority	6
Boston Regional Office	BORO	Federal Labor Relations Authority	5
Dallas Regional Office	DARO	Federal Labor Relations Authority	7

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
Federal Labor Relations Authority	FLRA	Federal Labor Relations Authority	85
Office of the General Counsel	OGC	Federal Labor Relations Authority	0
San Francisco Regional Office	SFRO	Federal Labor Relations Authority	2
Washington Regional Office	WARO	Federal Labor Relations Authority	2
Federal Maritime Commission	FMC	Federal Maritime Commission	35
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	FMCS	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	55
FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION	FMSHRC	FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION	140
Federal Open Market Committee	FOMC	Federal Open Market Committee	34
Federal Reserve Board	FRB	Federal Reserve Board	778
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	FRTIB	Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	14
Federal Trade Commission	FTC	Federal Trade Commission	1531
General Services Administration	GSA	General Services Administration	934
General Services Administration - Main	GSA - Main	General Services Administration	934
Office of Inspector General	J	General Services Administration	0
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council	GCERC	Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council	0
Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation	HSTSF	Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation	0
Institute of Museum and Library Services	IMLS	Institute of Museum and Library Services	34
Inter-American Foundation	IAF	Inter-American Foundation	3
Office of Legal Affairs	OLA	Legal Services Corporation	43
Legal Services Corporation	LSC	Legal Services Corporation	54
Office of Inspector General	OIG	Legal Services Corporation	11
Millennium Challenge Corporation	MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation	19
Ames Research Center	ARC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	41
Armstrong Flight Research Center	AFRC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	24
Glenn Research Center	GRC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	17
Goddard Space Flight Center	GSFC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	100
Headquarters	HQ	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	231
Jet Propulsion Laboratory	JPL	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	56
Johnson Space Center	JSC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	133
Kennedy Space Center	KSC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	99
Langley Research Center	LaRC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	38
Marshall Space Flight Center	MSFC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	73
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	922
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	67
Shared Services Center	NSSC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	22
Stennis Space Center	SSC	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	21
National Archives and Records Administration	NARA	National Archives and Records Administration	22555
National Capital Planning Commission	NCPC	National Capital Planning Commission	3
National Council on Disability	NCD	National Council on Disability	0
National Credit Union Administration	NCUA	National Credit Union Administration	89
National Endowment for the Arts	NEA	National Endowment for the Arts	55
National Endowment for the Humanities	NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities	62
National Indian gaming Commission	NIGC	National Indian gaming Commission	43
National Labor Relations Board	NLRB	National Labor Relations Board	4010
NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD	NMB	NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD	36
National Railroad Passenger Corporation	NRPC	National Railroad Passenger Corporation	257
National Science Foundation	NSF	National Science Foundation	302
Office of General Counsel	OGC	National Science Foundation	288
Office of Inspector General	OIG	National Science Foundation	14
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation	NW	Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation	4
NTSB	NTSB	NTSB	566
Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	OSHRC	Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	53
Office of Government Ethics	OGE	Office of Government Ethics	70
Office of Management and Budget	OMB	Office of Management and Budget	198
Office of National Drug Control Policy	ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy	43
Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation	ONHIR	Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation	179
Office of Science and Technology Policy	OSTP	Office of Science and Technology Policy	99

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
Office of the Director of National Intelligence	ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence	395
Overseas Private Investment Corporation	OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation	40
Peace Corps	PC	Peace Corps	248
FOIA/PA Office	FOIA Office	Peace Corps	213
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	Peace Corps	35
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	PBGC	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	2278
Postal Regulatory Commission	PRC	Postal Regulatory Commission	8
Presidio Trust	PT	Presidio Trust	0
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board	PCLOB	Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board	11
Office of Inspector General	OIG	Railroad Retirement Board	5
Railroad Retirement Board	US RRB	Railroad Retirement Board	123
RRB	RRB	Railroad Retirement Board	118
Selective Service System	SSS	Selective Service System	7
Social Security Administration	SSA	Social Security Administration	23208
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction	SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction	37
Surface Transportation Board	STB	Surface Transportation Board	65
Tennessee Valley Authority	TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority	198
U. S. Office of Personnel Management	OPM	U. S. Office of Personnel Management	10720
POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE	PIS	U. S. POSTAL SERVICE	403
POSTAL SERVICE	PS	U. S. POSTAL SERVICE	1760
U. S. POSTAL SERVICE	USPS	U. S. POSTAL SERVICE	2642
USPS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL	OIG	U. S. POSTAL SERVICE	479
U.S. African Development Foundation	US ADF	U.S. African Development Foundation	2
U.S. Agency for International Development	USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development	325
U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board	CSB	U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board	45
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights	USCCR	U.S. Commission on Civil Rights	21
U.S. Copyright Office	CO	U.S. Copyright Office	36
U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services	USCIS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	162986
U.S. Customs and Border Protection	CBP	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	52290
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	758
Office of Intelligence & Analysis	I&A	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	238
Privacy Office	PRIV	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	649
Transportation and Security Administration	TSA	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	554
United States Coast Guard	USCG	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	3176
United States Immigration & Customs Enforcement	ICE	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	44748
United States Secret Service	USSS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	1497
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center	FLETC	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	122
National Protection and Programs Directorate	NPPD	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	13781
Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	CRCL	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	40
Office of Inspector General	OIG	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	261
Science & Technology Directorate	S&T	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	38
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	281138
Mine Safety and Health Administration	MSHA	U.S. Department of Labor	1300
Adjudicatory Boards (ARB, BRB, ECAB)	ADJ BDS	U.S. Department of Labor	32
Bureau of International Labor Affairs	ILAB	U.S. Department of Labor	13
Bureau of Labor Statistics	BLS	U.S. Department of Labor	38
Chief Financial Officer	CFO	U.S. Department of Labor	3
Employee Benefits Security Administration	EBSA	U.S. Department of Labor	507
Employment and Training Administration	ETA	U.S. Department of Labor	1649
Executive Secretariat	EXEC SEC	U.S. Department of Labor	0
Occupational Safety and Health Administration	OSHA	U.S. Department of Labor	9123
Office of Administrative Law Judges	ALJ	U.S. Department of Labor	121
Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs	OCIA	U.S. Department of Labor	29
Office of Disability Employment Policy	ODEP	U.S. Department of Labor	7
Office of Federal Contract Compliance	OFCCP	U.S. Department of Labor	183
Office of Inspector General	OIG	U.S. Department of Labor	83
Office of Labor-Management Standards	OLMS	U.S. Department of Labor	91

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
Office of Public Affairs	OPA	U.S. Department of Labor	18
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management	OASAM	U.S. Department of Labor	169
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy	ASP	U.S. Department of Labor	11
Office of the Secretary	OSEC	U.S. Department of Labor	55
Office of the Solicitor	SOL	U.S. Department of Labor	53
Office of Workers' Compensation Programs	OWCP	U.S. Department of Labor	430
U.S. Department of Labor	U.S. DOL	U.S. Department of Labor	16792
Veterans' Employment and Training Services	VETS	U.S. Department of Labor	144
Wage and Hour Division	WHD	U.S. Department of Labor	2726
Women's Bureau	WB	U.S. Department of Labor	7
Department of State	DoS	U.S. Department of State	24747
Office of Inspector General	OIG	U.S. Department of State	90
U.S. Department of State	State	U.S. Department of State	24837
U.S. Election Assistance Commission	EAC	U.S. Election Assistance Commission	0
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	10910
Headquarters	HQ	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	1955
Region 1	Region 1	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	293
Region 10	Region 10	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	456
Region 2	Region 2	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	2227
Region 3	Region 3	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	951
Region 4	Region 4	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	889
Region 5	Region 5	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	1798
Region 6	Region 6	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	686
Region 7	Region 7	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	472
Region 8	Region 8	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	307
Region 9	Region 9	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	876
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	EEOC	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	17883
Atlanta District Office	Atlanta	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1442
Birmingham District Office	Birmingham	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1088
Charlotte District Office	Charlotte	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	900
Chicago District Office	Chicago	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	779
Dallas District Office	Dallas	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1575
Houston District Office	Houston	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	927
Indianapolis District Office	Indianapolis	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1820
Los Angeles District Office	Los Angeles	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1279
Memphis District Office	Memphis	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	691
Miami District Office	Miami	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1715
New York District Office	New York	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	876
Office of Legal Counsel/Headquarters	OLC/HDQ	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	620
Philadelphia District Office	Philadelphia	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1527
Phoenix District Office	Phoenix	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	629
San Francisco District Office	San Francisco	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	716
St. Louis District Office	St. Louis	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	1067
Washington Field Office	WFO	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	232
U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board	MSPB	U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board	165
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission	USNRC	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission	505
U.S. Office of Special Counsel	OSC	U.S. Office of Special Counsel	146
U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission	SEC	U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission	16891
U.S. Small Business Administration	SBA	U.S. Small Business Administration	955
U.S. Trade and Development Agency	USTDA	U.S. Trade and Development Agency	18
United States Consumer Product Safety Commission	U.S. CPSC	United States Consumer Product Safety Commission	715
Farm Service Agency	FSA	United States Department of Agriculture	14854
Office of the Inspector General	OIG	United States Department of Agriculture	115
Agricultural Marketing Service	AMS	United States Department of Agriculture	141
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	APHIS	United States Department of Agriculture	955
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights	ASCR	United States Department of Agriculture	32
Food Safety and Inspection Service	FSIS	United States Department of Agriculture	319

Name	Abbreviation	Agency	2015 Received
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services	FNCS	United States Department of Agriculture	495
Foreign Agricultural Service	FAS	United States Department of Agriculture	52
Forest Service	FS	United States Department of Agriculture	2072
Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration	GIPSA	United States Department of Agriculture	75
Natural Resources Conservation Service	NRCS	United States Department of Agriculture	252
Office of Budget and Program Analysis	OBPA	United States Department of Agriculture	23
Office of General Counsel	OGC	United States Department of Agriculture	17
Office of the Chief Financial Officer	OCFO	United States Department of Agriculture	11
Office of the Secretary/Departmental Management	OSEC/OCIO/D	United States Department of Agriculture	235
Research, Education and Economics	REE	United States Department of Agriculture	127
Risk Management Agency	RMA	United States Department of Agriculture	95
Rural Development	RD	United States Department of Agriculture	260
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture	20132
International Trade Administration	ITA	United States Department of Commerce	69
Bureau of Industry and Security	BIS	United States Department of Commerce	100
Bureau of the Census	Census	United States Department of Commerce	543
Economic and Statistics Administration/Bureau of Economic Analysis	ESA	United States Department of Commerce	11
Economic Development Administration	EDA	United States Department of Commerce	42
Minority Business Development Agency	MBDA	United States Department of Commerce	6
National Institute of Standards and Technology	NIST	United States Department of Commerce	114
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA	United States Department of Commerce	473
National Technical Information Service	NTIS	United States Department of Commerce	15
National Telecommunications and Information Administration	NTIA	United States Department of Commerce	76
Office of Inspector General	OIG	United States Department of Commerce	170
Office of the Secretary	OS	United States Department of Commerce	235
United States Patent and Trademark Office	PTO	United States Department of Commerce	376
United States Department of Commerce	DOC	United States Department of Commerce	2230
United States International Boundary and Water Commission	USIBWC	United States International Boundary and Water Commission	27
UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION	USITC	UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION	31
United States Trade Representative	USTR	United States Trade Representative	102
US Access Board	USAB	US Access Board	11
Bureau of Land Management	BLM	US Department of the Interior	836
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management	BOEM	US Department of the Interior	171
Bureau of Reclamation	BOR	US Department of the Interior	351
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement	BSEE	US Department of the Interior	254
National Park Service	NPS	US Department of the Interior	812
Office of Inspector General	OIG	US Department of the Interior	212
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement	OSM	US Department of the Interior	117
Office of the Secretary	OS	US Department of the Interior	572
Office of the Solicitor	SOL	US Department of the Interior	104
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	FWS	US Department of the Interior	1300
U.S. Geological Survey	USGS	US Department of the Interior	213
US Department of the Interior	DOI	US Department of the Interior	6814
Bureau Of Indian Affairs	BIA	US Department of the Interior	1872

2015 Processed 2016 Received		2016 Processed Tools		Reading Room Su 2016 Reading Room										
2180	2345	2281	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal	9										
203	261	266												
80	75	80												
95	149	140												
85	72	67												
96	105	103												
981	1060	1017												
31	19	23												
95	107	108												
128	150	137												
137	143	142												
204	160	152												
45	44	46												
834	789	665	custom	44										
104	93	83	custom	a lot										
13405	15202	13758	custom (eFOIPA efoia.fbi.gov)	6700										
88	123	108	custom (IQ)	43										
310	276	280	custom (Oracle)	0	0									
3874	3982	4327	FOIAOnline	9										
812	1071	1094	FOIAOnline	200	40									
8128	7664	7496	FOIAXpress	47										
562	445	522	FOIAXpress	2400	490									
1677	1724	1824	FOIAXpress	26										
356	373	430	FOIAXpress	1600	130									
347	306	260	FOIAXpress (via email)											
1146	1138	1598	IQ (Intranet Quorum)	49	0									
114	93	90	manual	11	0									
40	27	27	manual	9000	100									
1766	1748	1712	manual	675										
201	178	181	manual	12	1									
102	97	100	manual	27										
97	111	104	manual	120	58									
31764	35500	34819	manual	7										
57	58	54	manual											
97	90	45	manual (email + IQ)	23+	7+									
85	96	92	manual (moving to FOIXpress)											
134	131	130												
19	27	25												
67825	73103	71854												
175	200	259												
77	70	64												
92	92	139												
120	106	104												
50	42	50												
102	63	83												
254	334	402												
141	131	222												
92	94	97												
31	25	24												
127	93	97												
445	511	489												
10416	8825	8791	custom (aFOIA)	70234	603									
106	103	105	custom (GoFOIA)	28										
83	58	64	custom (GoFOIA)	100s										
327	280	284	custom (GoFOIA)											
627	894	720	custom (GoFOIA)	100s	10									
390	417	399	custom (GoFOIA)	100s										

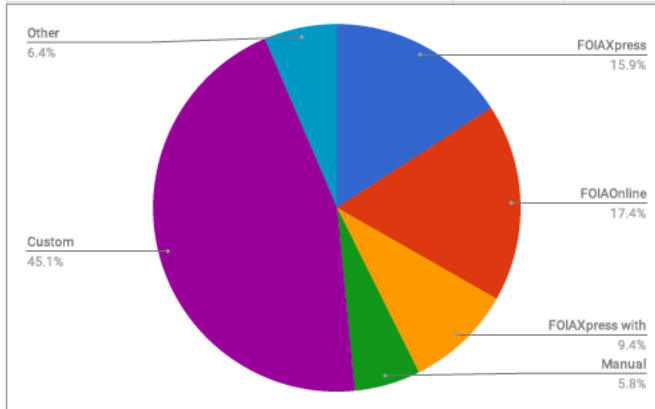
[illegible]

2015 Processed	2016 Received	2016 Processed	Tools	Reading Room Su	2016 Reading Room
20	2	3			
157	177	183			
17	12	18			
50	32	35			
64	103	108			
410	369	379			
17104	16196	16466			
150	138	136			
2832	2589	2631			
8	14	15			
13913	27856	15386	custom		
89	105	96	custom		
14002	27961	15482	custom	160153	27786
0	18	15			
11278	10403	10498	FOIAOnline	2000000	500000
1912	2160	2103			
288	304	307			
544	396	398			
2274	2091	2193			
1278	808	861			
842	791	847			
1780	1691	1687			
699	728	677			
489	451	438			
310	300	302			
862	683	685			
17481	17680	17068	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal	1000s	100s
1432	1304	1320			
998	1268	1292			
925	1005	906			
768	603	547			
1514	1607	1711			
839	774	817			
1778	1889	1838			
1276	1047	1052			
698	571	572			
1688	1733	1679			
898	773	614			
594	647	596			
1358	1548	1595			
581	670	668			
823	692	636			
1074	1305	982			
237	244	243			
136	206	168	FOIAOnline	1148	845
586	785	753			
115	143	184			
16210	14458	15196	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal	11	4
926	1116	1075	FOIAOnline	468	5
6	24	30	manual	48	8
770	702	697	FOIAXpress (PAL in Aug 2017)		
14232	18463	18104	custom (FOIA-Capture)	4	0
112	95	97	FOIAXpress	250	0
142	153	134	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
959	1143	1008	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
33	21	21	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
374	337	376	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		

2015 Processed 2016 Received		2016 Processed Tools		Reading Room Sü 2016 Reading Room	
462	515	526	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
46	9	1	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
1935	1977	1757	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
74	39	38	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
221	282	294	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
23	15	15	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
12	16	8	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
5	2	0	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
225	205	222	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
122	117	115	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
97	85	87	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
485	396	331	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
19559	23870	23134	FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal		
7	73	102	custom (portal + internal db)	40	
98	60	70	FOIAOnline	727	48
539	431	441	FOIAOnline	61	7
10	17	18	FOIAOnline	0	0
41	32	37	FOIAOnline	4005	0
5	19	20	FOIAOnline	1	0
107	132	138	FOIAOnline	0	0
498	485	495	FOIAOnline	10000+	10000+
13	8	3	FOIAOnline	100	0
69	98	89	FOIAOnline	1220	
169	100	110	FOIAOnline	18	0
251	222	269	FOIAOnline	500	45
356	349	356	FOIAXpress	991,705	
2163	2026	2148			
1	34	32	manual		
30	27	29			
93	118	118	manual		
11	13	13	manual		
796	852	837	custom	4	
165	127	135	custom	18	
345	232	234	custom	23	
243	172	182	custom	7	
846	918	875	custom	150	
215	159	153	custom	3	
117	83	74	custom	1	
548	512	540	custom	29	
117	137	155	custom	70	
1333	1132	1175	custom	20	
219	212	200	custom	10	
6760	6428	6437	custom	6	
1816	1892	1877	manual	34	

Summary of Tools by Request

FOIAXpress	123000
FOIAOnline	135000
FOIAXpress with PAL	73000
Manual	45000
Custom	350000
Other	50000

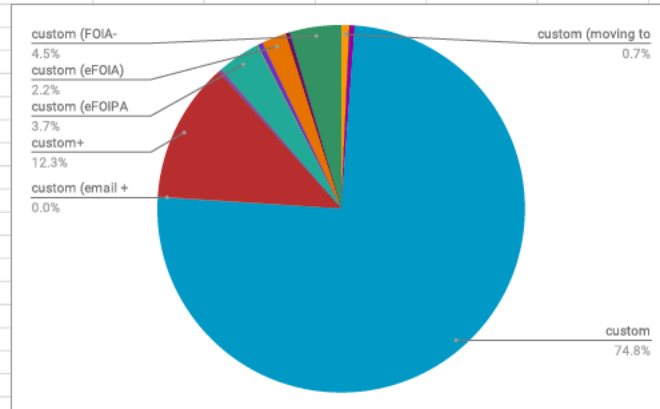


the above is a rough summar of these details from sheet 1

custom (Sharepoint tracker)	93
custom (IQ)	123
custom (moving to FOIAOnline)	2679
custom (portal + internal db)	73
custom (DATAWARDEN from CACI)	1881
custom	304161
custom (Oracle)	276
custom (email + Lotus Notes)	35
custom+ FOIAOnline	49966
Public Records Tracker (Avtex)	193
IQ (Intranet Quorum)	1138
custom (eFOIPA efoipa.fbi.gov)	15202
custom (USCENTCOM FOIA Tracking Tool/Database)	280
custom (GoFOIA)	1849
custom (eFOIA)	8825
custom (portal generates email)	165
custom+ FOIAXpress	1324
custom (FOIA-Capture)	18463
manual (moving to FOIAXpress)	96
manual	44372
manual (email + IQ)	90
FOIAXpress (PAL in Aug 2017)	702
FOIAXpress (via email)	306
FOIAOnline	130082
FOIAXpress with PAL Web Portal	71969
FOIAXpress	122109

Summary of Tools by Agency

FOIAXpress	36
FOIAonline	22
FOIAXpress with PAL	26



api.data.gov configuration

api.data.gov admin interface is available here <https://api.data.gov/admin/>.

Additional details about how the foia-api works are available in the [project's docs](#).

API backend configuration

All the backends (dev, stage, prod) are all configured the same. The only difference is the host name, back end, and X-Forwarded-Host options. Additionally, the dev environment does not require API keys to make debugging easier.

Edit API

Name

Backend

Define the server where the API is hosted. Multiple servers can be defined to perform load balancing.

Backend Protocol

Server

[Edit](#)[Remove](#)[Add Server](#)

Host

Define the host that we will listen for, and then the host the API backend is listening for.

Frontend Host



Backend Host

Matching URL Prefixes

What URL prefixes should be routed to this backend?

Frontend Prefix

Backend Prefix

[Edit](#)[Remove](#)[Add URL Prefix](#)

Global Request Settings

Append Query String Parameters

Set Request Headers

HTTP Basic Authentication

HTTPS Requirements



API Key Checks

API Key Verification

The sub-url option is a work around to allow the preflight CORS check to work properly. The configuration looks like this:

Edit Sub-URL Request Settings

HTTP Method

OP⁺ ▼

Regex

.*

HTTPS Requirements

Inherit (default - required) ▼

API Key Checks

Disabled - API keys are optional ▼

API Key Verification Requirements

Inherit (default - none) ▼

Required Roles

Pass API Key to Backend (deprecated)

☐ Override required roles from "Global Request Settings"

☐ Via HTTP header

☐ Via GET query parameter

Rate Limit	Default rate limits ▼
Anonymous Rate Limit Behavior	IP Fallback - API key rate limits are applied as IP limits ▼
Authenticated Rate Limit Behavior	All Limits - Both API key rate limits and IP based limits are a ▼
Default Response Headers ?	X-Example-Header: value
Override Response Headers ?	X-Example-Header: value

[Cancel](#) [OK](#)

Embedded API key configuration

You may find you need to adjust the limits for these keys. Edit links are available here:

- [edit development](#)
- [edit staging](#)
- [edit production](#)

Edit API User

User Info

E-mail	<input type="text" value="aaron.borden@gsa.gov"/>
First Name	<input type="text" value="Aaron"/>
Last Name	<input type="text" value="Borden"/>
Purpose	<input type="text" value="www.foia.gov embedded key (prod)"/>
Signed Up	2017-10-31 16:14 -07:00
API Key	mUPocz... (reveal)
User ID	1cd852bc-615e-4bbf-ab26-3ca57452db61
Registration Source	web_admin

Rate Limiting

Rate Limit	<input type="text" value="Default rate limits"/>
Limit By	<input type="text" value="Rate limit by IP address"/>

Permissions

Roles	<input type="text"/>
Restrict Access to IPs	<input type="text" value="10.0.0.0/8"/>
Restrict Access to HTTP Referers	<input type="text" value="https://*.foia.gov/*"/>
Account Enabled	<input type="text" value="Enabled"/>

[Save](#)

There's a potential demo day. Planning for that? What are we going to show?

- Demo the contacts list
- Show them really rough mockups of what future things might look like to use it to collect feedback
 - Not high fidelity so it doesn't feel like it's already been built
 - Probably a mock of the baseline form and other things

There's a contact list for agency-agency contacts. Do we ever want to hold/represent that?

- Not going to do this one. Not our focus.

Ability for users to indicate or suggest missing keywords?

- Add to backlog, but low priority.

Keywords should be associated with each Office (not just Agency)

- Higher in the priority list for the sprint after the current one.

Ability for an agency to mark a mis-routed request (maybe through email, or something simple) to help the system learn.

- Medium priority.

Keywords will be public (through the API). Is that ok?

- That's ok.

NARA dates. For older stuff?


- Add to backlog low priority.

Agencies without online forms - definitely value added. Phased rollout.

-

Cloud Foundry Setup

(b) (5), (b) (7)



You can change your password with

cf password

Accessing foia.org

Your account should be given access to the foia.org and its associated page

Orgs present a shared perimeter for services, domains and quotas. Every application is scoped to a "space" within an org. Applications in the same space share a location for app development, deployment, and maintenance. Currently the openFOIA is hosted inside the `foia` org and `hub` space.

```
...
```

```
# list available orgs
cf orgs
```

```
# view the foia org's details
cf org foia
```

```
# set Cloud Foundry to work with the foia org
cf target -o ORGNAME
```

```
# set Cloud Foundry to work with the hub space inside foia
cf target -o foia -s hub
```

```
# check environment variables for the `hub` space inside of the `foia` org
cf env foia
...
```

```
# Pre-deployment requirements
```

```
## Create a .cfignore file
```

Cloud Foundry uses a file format identical to .gitignore to decide which files to ignore when deploying. You'll definitely want to put *.pyc, local_settings.py, and your staticfiles folder in there.

```
...
```

```
cp .gitignore .cfignore
...
```

```
## Create a runtime.txt
```

Next, you want to tell Cloud Foundry which Python runtime to use. To do this, create a runtime.txt file, and put the full version of Python you want to deploy with in it.

As of press time, 18F's CF has an available Python 3 runtime of 3.4.0. This is the full contents of runtime.txt:

```
...
```

```
python-3.4.0
```



```
...
```

Updating requirements.txt

In addition to the app's requirements, the requirements below should be added.

```
...
```

```
dj-static==0.0.6
dj-database-url==0.3.0
waitress==0.8.9
...
```

Updating wsgi.py

The below wsgi.py assumes the use of dj-static for static assets.

```
```python
import os
from django.core.wsgi import get_wsgi_application
from dj_static import Cling

from foia_hub.settings.base import BASE_DIR

os.environ.setdefault("DJANGO_SETTINGS_MODULE", "foia_hub.settings")
application = Cling(get_wsgi_application())
```
```

wsgi.py is where you might also put a conditional block to check for New Relic and load in its settings:

```
```python
if os.getenv("NEW_RELIC_LICENSE_KEY"):
 import newrelic.agent
 newrelic.agent.initialize(os.path.join(
 BASE_DIR, 'newrelic.ini'))
```
```

Create the `Procfile` file

```
...
```

```
web: waitress-serve --port=$VCAP_APP_PORT foia_hub.wsgi:application
...
```

Create the `manifest.yml`

The [manifest file](#) tells `cf push` what to do with your app. Here's an example:

```
```yaml

all applications use these settings and services
memory: 1G
instances: 1
applications:
- name: krang
 path: .
 timeout: 180
 services:
 - es
```
```

Create an RDS instance within the CF VPC

DevOps should be able to do this.

Updating settings to include RDS

Import the database url into the django settings file

```
```python
import dj_database_url
```
```

Configure the database to use `dj_database_url`, and other values to be loaded in directly from environment variables.

```
```python
SECRET_KEY = os.getenv("FOIA_SECRET_SESSION_KEY")
DATABASES = {'default': dj_database_url.parse(os.getenv("DATABASE_URL"))}
SHOW_WEBFORM = (os.getenv("FOIA_SHOW_WEBFORM") == "true")
ANALYTICS_ID = os.getenv("FOIA_ANALYTICS_ID")
CF_SERVICES = os.getenv("VCAP_SERVICES")
if CF_SERVICES:
 CF_SERVICES = json.loads(CF_SERVICES)
 ES_URL = CF_SERVICES['elasticsearch-0.20'][0]['credentials']['url']
else:
 ES_URL = 'http://127.0.0.1:9200/'
```

```
HAYSTACK_CONNECTIONS = {
 'default': {
 'ENGINE':
 'haystack.backends.elasticsearch_backend.ElasticsearchSearchEngine',
 'URL': ES_URL,
 'INDEX_NAME': 'haystack',
 },
}
```

...

## Setup error monitoring

### Create New Relic Account

DevOps should be able to set this up

### Connecting New Relic

[Instructions](<https://docs.newrelic.com/docs/agents/python-agent/getting-started/new-relic-python>)

- add newrelic to the requirements.txt
- add newrelic.ini file
- import new relic into wsgi.py

## Setting env variables

...

```
cf set-env foia DATABASE_URL [value]
cf set-env foia FOIA_ANALYTICS_ID [value]
cf set-env foia FOIA_SECRET_SESSION_KEY [value]
cf set-env foia DJANGO_SETTINGS_MODULE foia_hub.settings.dev
cf set-env foia NEW_RELIC_LICENSE_KEY=[value]
cf set-env foia NEW_RELIC_APP_NAME=[value]
...
```

## setting route for app

...

```
cf map-route foia open.foia.gov
...
```

### ## Get TLS certificate in place

Purchase a TLS certificate, upload it to Amazon Web Services, and have our Cloud Foundry set up use it to serve the application.

### ## Setup s3 Buckets

Setup s3 bucket for static files set CORS configuration to:

```
...
<CORSConfiguration>
 <CORSRule>
 <AllowedOrigin>*</AllowedOrigin>
 <AllowedMethod>GET</AllowedMethod>
 <MaxAgeSeconds>3000</MaxAgeSeconds>
 <AllowedHeader>Authorization</AllowedHeader>
 </CORSRule>
</CORSConfiguration>
...
```

### ## Production settings

Change the production `ALLOWED\_HOSTS` settings to allow the specific hosts we use

```
...
export DJANGO_SETTINGS_MODULE=foia_hub.settings.production
...
```

### ## Running the app / updating the app

```
...
cf push foia -c "bash cf.sh"
...
```

Ed. Note: This is a rapid inventory of the existing FOIA.gov site's components. It is not comprehensive.

## Takeaway

None of this is very reusable. The CSS leans heavily on IDs instead of classes, and often styles duplicative elements separately instead of defining a shared style. However, because styles are so narrowly scoped to the elements they define, it may be easier to replace bits and pieces of the system instead of rewriting the whole thing at once.

## Elements

### Articles with thumbnails

Found on the homepage. These involve a small thumbnail with a headline, description and “read more” link. They rely on the text not being too tall to wrap around the image.

### Fonts

Font stacks in use are as follows:

Calibri, "Trebuchet MS", Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif

Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif

Palatino, Helvetica, Courier New, Palatino, Courier (appears to only be used on the #foia-title element)

### Form components

There don't appear to be overall form styles; rather, each input is styled individually. (Many of these are found in foia-search.css.)

Buttons are currently images, which raises concerns about usability.

Currently, there don't appear to be the recommended ARIA attributes in use on formfields and their related inputs.

Labels and legends are set to display: none by default, which raises accessibility concerns.

## **Grid**

There is no grid currently in play. Container widths are absolute and hardcoded, with the common size being 960px.

## **Hero unit**

The main page hero unit styles can be found under #hero. These elements have absolute pixel widths hardcoded.

## **Mobile styles**

There are no media queries or mobile styles currently in play.

## **Side nav**

Learn and Find both use a side nav on their pages. These styles are found under #subNav and #subNav2 (there does not seem to be a difference between these two at first glance).

## **Tables**

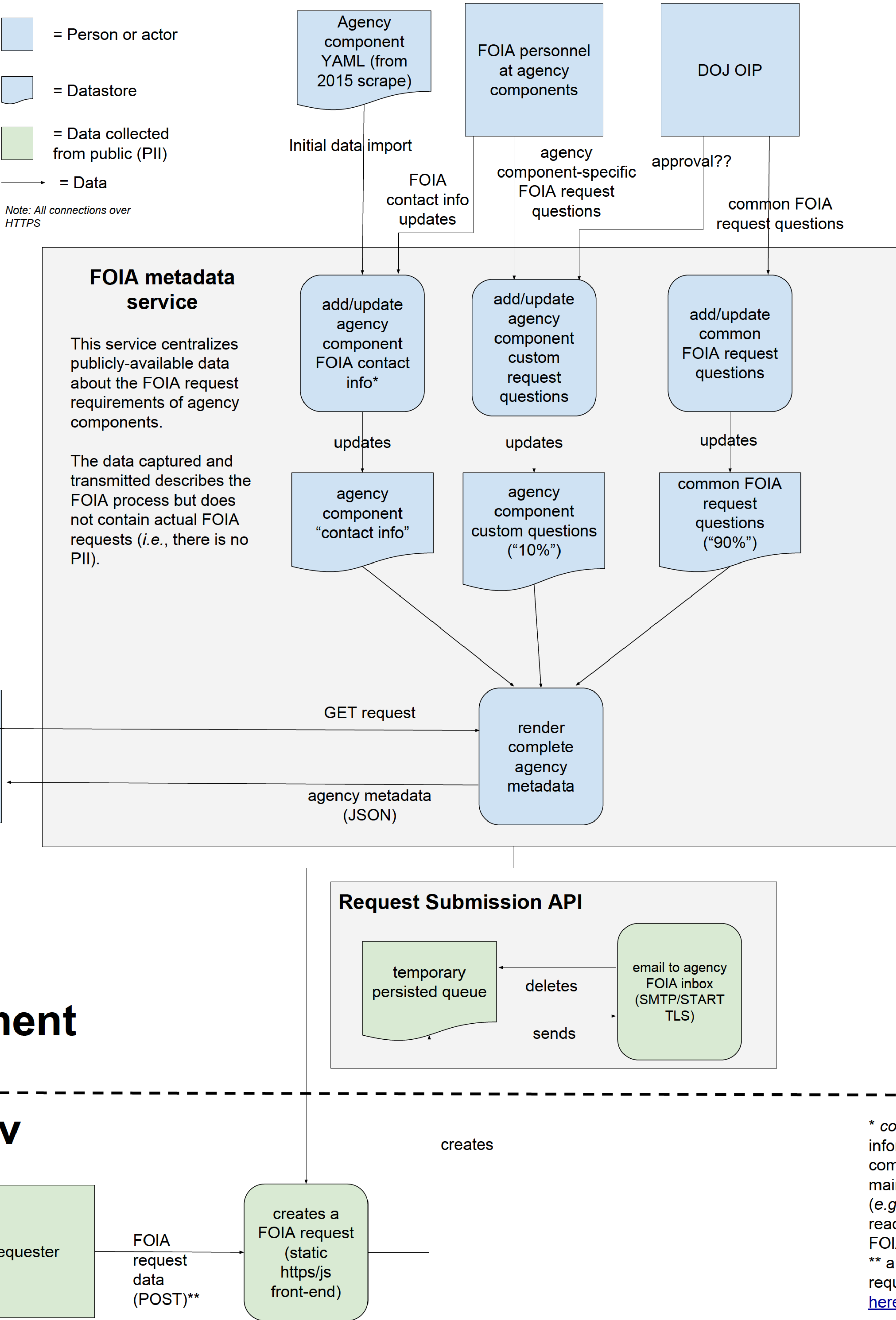
Basic zebra-striped table styles appear fine, though the current even/odd classes could be replaced with nth-child selectors. Also, tables currently use <center> tags, which were deprecated in HTML4.

## **Tabs**

The header uses a tab aesthetic for its main navigation. These styles can be found under #tabnav but are largely just an unstyled ul with a background image for each tab.

There are also tabs on the front page “Reports” box, but these also are basic unstyled ul lis with background images and a bit of JS to switch the “active” tab.

# FOIA Portal Data Flow Diagram



\* *contact info* = FOIA-related information that an agency component is responsible maintaining and updating (e.g., public liaison e-mail, reading room URLs, accepted FOIA submission methods)

\*\* a sample list of FOIA request fields is available [here](#).

# Tech Discussions

20140623

## Components

- Foia.gov
  - Front-end to communicate w/ users
- API
  - Reading room
    - MVP = a read only API
- Office Management Piece
- 508 PDF compliance
- Redaction

## ToDo:

- We w/ DOI dev to get their code set. -- Can we use them as their base.
- Jackie: Reach out to NARA about joint project on 508 compliance.
- Jackie: Create analysis of node and python and backend storage possibilities
- Jackie: Creating a diagram of the lay out
- Raph: Requests screenshots of all the backend systems from everyone.
- Eric:
  - Scrape FOIA online
  - Scrape State
  - Store in Elastic search for use on FOIA online
- Victor:
  - Feature requires

What is the thing that we are showing to the task force 3 weeks from now?

- Mock ups of FOIA online

(b) (5)



# Command Line Text to PDF Tools

## pdftotext

Documentation: <http://www.foolabs.com/xpdf/download.html>

### Mac install

```
brew install poppler
```

### Basic Run Command

```
pdftotext document.pdf text_file.txt
```

## pdf2txt.py

<http://www.unixuser.org/~euske/python/pdfminer/>

<http://euske.github.io/pdfminer/index.html>

### Mac install

```
pip install pdfminer
```

## Basic Run Command

```
pdf2txt.py -o text_file.txt document.pdf
```

# calibre ebook-convert (didn't work)

<http://calibre-ebook.com/> (<http://manual.calibre-ebook.com/cli/ebook-convert.html>)

## Mac install

[http://calibre-ebook.com/download\\_osx](http://calibre-ebook.com/download_osx) OSX download

## Basic Run Command (without changing user profile)

```
/Applications/calibre.app/Contents/MacOS/ebook-convert document.pdf
document_calibre.txt
```

# Tika

<http://tika.apache.org/>

## Mac install

Download the jar file

## Basic Run Command

```
java -jar tika-app-1.7.jar --text document.pdf > text_file.txt
```

# Ghostscript

<http://www.ghostscript.com/>

## Mac install

```
brew install ghostscript
```

## Basic Run Command

```
gs -dBATCH -dNOPAUSE -sDEVICE=txtwrite -sOutputFile=text_file.txt document.pdf
```

# pdf2line

It is based on "pdftotext" from the Xpdf suite, but with a different layout algorithm that preserves relative column position and line spacing.

# Tesseract & GS method

## Mac Install

```
brew install ghostscript brew install Tesseract
```

## Basic Run Command

Script which converts PDF into TIFF w/ ghostscript and then TIFF to txt with Tesseract  
for more info [http://benschmidt.org/dighist13/?page\\_id=129](http://benschmidt.org/dighist13/?page_id=129)

# pdfbox

<https://pdfbox.apache.org/1.8/commandline.html>

## Mac install

Download the jar file

## Basic Run Command

```
java -jar pdfbox-app-1.8.8.jar ExtractText document.pdf textfile.txt
```

# Useful links

## ORC tools

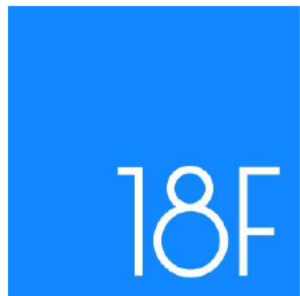
<http://jocr.sourceforge.net/>

<http://www.gnu.org/software/ocrad/ocrad.html><https://wiki.gnome.org/action/show/Apps/OCRFeeder?action=show&redirect=OCRFeeder>

## Best practices

<http://stackoverflow.com/questions/10854858/best-practices-for-searchable-archive-of-thousands-of-documents-pdf-and-or-xml>

<https://help.ubuntu.com/community/OCR>



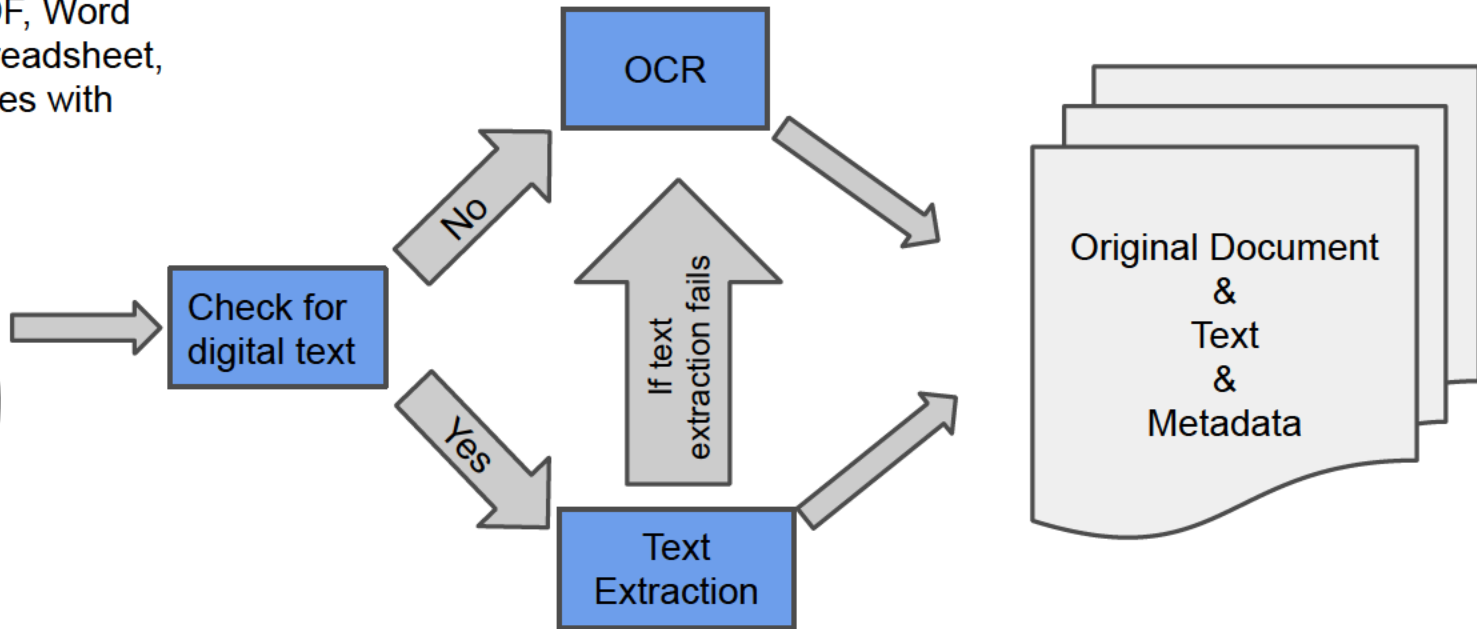
# Text Extraction and OCR

openFOIA Team

**How it works**

# How it works

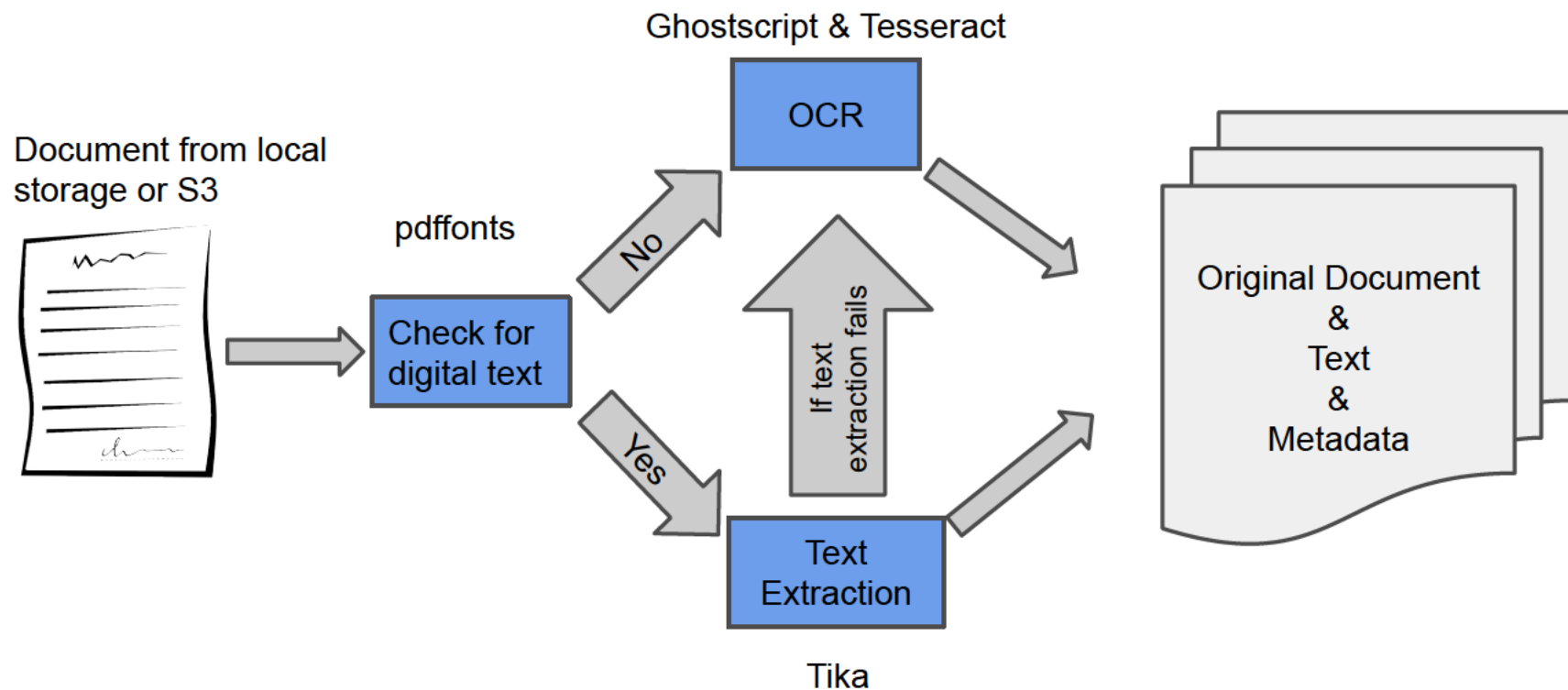
"Document - PDF, Word Docs, Excel Spreadsheet, MP3 or Video files with metadata."



# Technologies



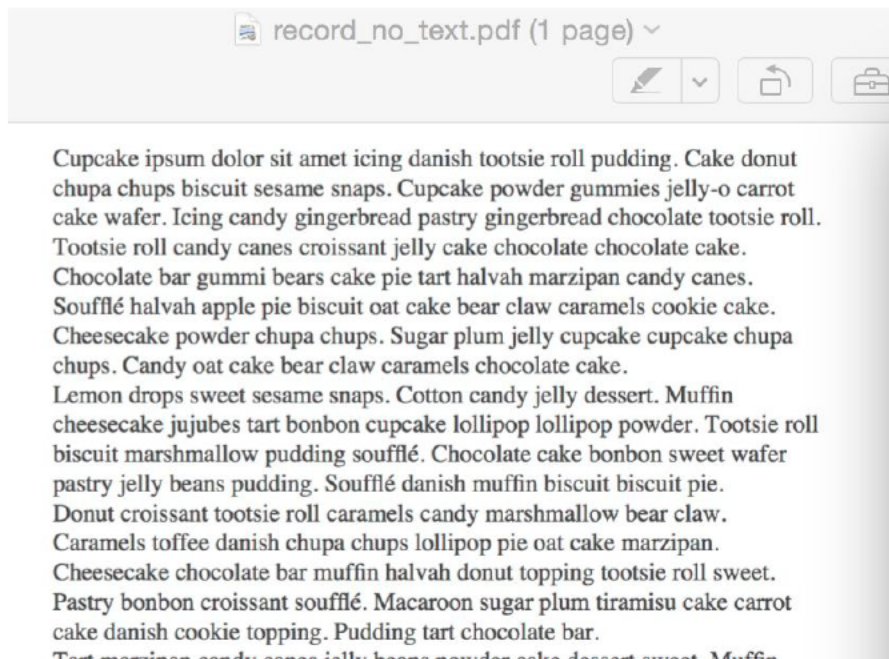
# Technologies



**What the process looks like**

# What the process looks like

PDF Document that does not have searchable text



# What the process looks like

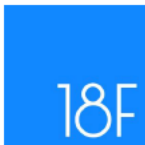
## Python Script

```
In [1]: # Setting up logging
import logging
logging.getLogger().setLevel(logging.INFO)

Importing dependencies
from glob import iglob
from textextraction.extractors import text_extractor
```

```
In [2]: # Converting files
for item in iglob('tests/fixtures/*'):
 text_extractor(item)
```

```
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/excel_spreadsheet.xlsx converted to text from pdf
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/record_no_text.pdf converted to png images
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/record_no_text.png converted to text from image
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/record_some_text.pdf converted to text from pdf
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/record_some_text.pdf converted to png images
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/record_some_text.png converted to text from image
INFO:root:tests/fixtures/record_text.pdf converted to text from pdf
```



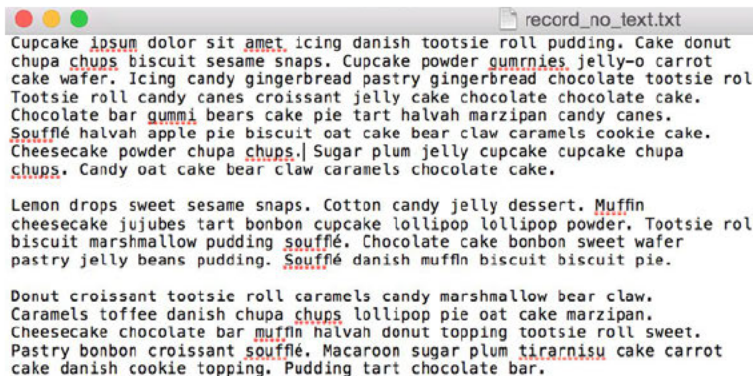
# What the process looks like

## Results

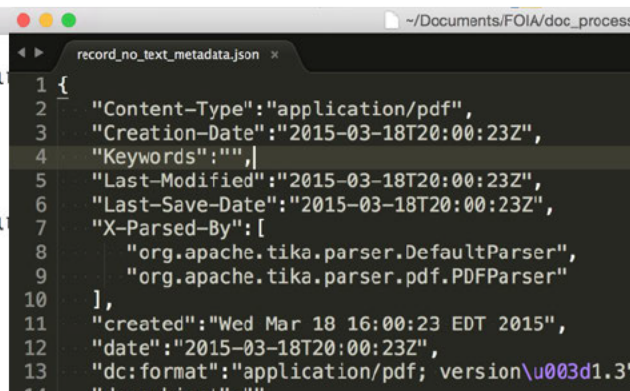
### Original Document



### Text Document



### Metadata



**How long does it take?**

# It depends

- Simple text extraction (Tika) is the fastest. We've been able to process hundreds an hour. Larger documents (50+ pages) can slow the extraction speed.
- OCR (ghostscript/Tesseract) can be much slower. On average, one page takes 2-5 seconds. Small documents can be processed a rate of tens an hour, but large documents can slow the system down significantly.
- However, with some modifications the extraction tools can be distributed to multiple servers allowing the process finish more quickly by a factor of the number of servers working on a batch of documents.

**Do we know this process  
works?**



# How do we know this process works?

- Text Extraction - Tested 6 different open source technologies for text extraction. Tika was the most accurate. It also extracts text and metadata from multiple types of sources, like PDFs, Word docs, Excel spreadsheet, MP3 text when available, and other formats.
- OCR - Researched and tested multiple methods and read source code of projects such as CourtListener.
- For more info visit our github repository  
[https://github.com/18F/doc\\_processing\\_toolkit](https://github.com/18F/doc_processing_toolkit)

## **Prompt**

My name is [your name] and I work for the 18F team at GSA. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this session.

Also with me is [note taker's name] who will help by taking notes today.

Our team is responsible for building the national FOIA portal which was mandated by congress last year in the FOIA Reform Act of 2016.

Our goal today is to get feedback on that portal. Your feedback will help us understand how we can build the best portal experience possible for the public.

I'd like for you to "think out loud" as you walk through the website we're working on. As you scan the website, please read any text that you would read if you were visiting the site on your own. Additionally, I'm going to ask you some question that might seem obvious. That's just our way of avoiding any assumptions about the experience.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to end this interview at any point. The notes will only be shared between 18F and our DOJ clients.

[No wrong/right answer]

We expect this interview to take about 45 minutes.

Do you have any questions for me before you get started? You can also ask questions at any point during the interview.

## **Landing page content test**

[Show home page]

Let's say you came to this website after doing a Google search around obtaining government documents.

- What is this site?
  - Observer: See what content they scan and grok. Note whether they scroll, and what they do and do not read.

Let's say you're interested in researching a relative who was a U.S. World War II veteran. You've come to this site to determine whether or not you can use FOIA to obtain their records. Where would you go to find out this information?

Let's say you are interested in finding out about which government agency has the shortest and longest response times. How would you go about finding this information?

## **Request scenario**

### **Scenario**

Have you ever filed a FOIA requester before? With which agency?

- Craft scenario around experience if applicable.

If not experienced w FOIA: Let's say that you're interested in tracking down any emails between the FEMA director and the governor of Puerto Rico in the days leading up to Hurricane Irma.

Tell us what you'd do next.

Department	Agency/Office	URL	URL in FOIAHub
Department of Justice	Antitrust Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/atr/foia/foiaroom.html">http://www.justice.gov/atr/foia/foiaroom.html</a>	
Department of Justice	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	<a href="https://www.atf.gov/content/contact-us/FOIA">https://www.atf.gov/content/contact-us/FOIA</a>	
Department of Justice	Civil Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/civil/foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/civil/foia-library</a>	
Department of Justice	Civil Rights Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/crt/foia/readingroom/">http://www.justice.gov/crt/foia/readingroom/</a>	
Department of Justice	Community Relations Service	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/crs/crs-electronic-reading-room">http://www.justice.gov/crs/crs-electronic-reading-room</a>	
Department of Justice	Criminal Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/criminal/foia/elect-read-room.html">http://www.justice.gov/criminal/foia/elect-read-room.html</a>	
Department of Justice	Drug Enforcement Administration	<a href="http://www.dea.gov/FOIA/FOIA_library.shtml">http://www.dea.gov/FOIA/FOIA_library.shtml</a>	
Department of Justice	Environment and Natural Resources Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/enrd/Current_topics.html">http://www.justice.gov/enrd/Current_topics.html</a>	
Department of Justice	Executive Office for Immigration Review	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/eoir/mainfoia.html">http://www.justice.gov/eoir/mainfoia.html</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Executive Office for Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces	no website	
Department of Justice	Executive Office for United States Attorneys	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/usao/resources/foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/usao/resources/foia-library</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Executive Office for United States Trustees	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/ust/eo/foia/foia_err.htm">http://www.justice.gov/ust/eo/foia/foia_err.htm</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Federal Bureau of Investigation	<a href="http://vault.fbi.gov/">http://vault.fbi.gov/</a>	
Department of Justice	Federal Bureau of Prisons	<a href="http://www.bop.gov/foia/index.jsp">http://www.bop.gov/foia/index.jsp</a>	no
Department of Justice	Foreign Claims Settlement Commission	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/fcsc/foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/fcsc/foia-library</a>	yes
Department of Justice	INTERPOL-United States National Central Bureau	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/interpol-washington/foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/interpol-washington/foia-library</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Justice Management Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/jmd/foia-library#processed">http://www.justice.gov/jmd/foia-library#processed</a>	yes
Department of Justice	National Security Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/nsd/nsd-foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/nsd/nsd-foia-library</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services	<a href="http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=40">http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=40</a>	no
Department of Justice	Office of Information Policy	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip">http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Justice Programs	<a href="http://ojp.gov/about/foia/reading_room.htm">http://ojp.gov/about/foia/reading_room.htm</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Legal Counsel	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/olc/olc-foia-electronic-reading-room">http://www.justice.gov/olc/olc-foia-electronic-reading-room</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Legal Policy	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip">http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Legislative Affairs	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip">http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Professional Responsibility	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/opr/readingroom/index.html">http://www.justice.gov/opr/readingroom/index.html</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Public Affairs	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip">http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of Tribal Justice	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/usao/resources/foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/usao/resources/foia-library</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of the Associate Attorney General	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/asg/oasg-electronic-reading-room">http://www.justice.gov/asg/oasg-electronic-reading-room</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of the Attorney General	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip">http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of the Deputy Attorney General	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip">http://www.justice.gov/oip/available-documents-oip</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of the Inspector General	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/oig/foia/eroom.htm">http://www.justice.gov/oig/foia/eroom.htm</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of the Pardon Attorney	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/pardon/pardon-attorney-foia/foia-li">http://www.justice.gov/pardon/pardon-attorney-foia/foia-li</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office of the Solicitor General	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/osg/osg-freedom-information-act-f">http://www.justice.gov/osg/osg-freedom-information-act-f</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Office on Violence Against Women	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/ovw/ovw-freedom-information-act">http://www.justice.gov/ovw/ovw-freedom-information-act</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Professional Responsibility Advisory Office	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/prao/foia-library">http://www.justice.gov/prao/foia-library</a>	yes
Department of Justice	Tax Division	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/tax/readingroom/foia/tax.htm">http://www.justice.gov/tax/readingroom/foia/tax.htm</a>	yes
Department of Justice	United States Marshals Service	<a href="http://www.usmarshals.gov/readingroom/files.html">http://www.usmarshals.gov/readingroom/files.html</a>	no
Department of Justice	United States Parole Commission	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/uspc/freedom-information-act-foia">http://www.justice.gov/uspc/freedom-information-act-foia</a>	yes

Search (by title)	Search (by doc)	Doc permalinks	Format	Meta Data: Date Relea	Meta Data: Date Poste	Meta Data: Tags	Number of Docs	Pro-active docs
No	No	Yes	PDF	Yes	No	No	15 since 2000	
No	No	Yes						Yes
No	No	No	PDF	Year only	No	No	~60 since 1999	No
No	No	Yes	pdf, txt	Yes	No	No	many	Yes
No	No	Yes	PDF	No	No	No	1 since 1988	
No	No	Yes	PDF	No	No	No	under 50	
No	No	N/A	N/A	No	No	No		0 No
No	No	Yes	HTML, PDF	Yes	No	No	~20 since 1991	Yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	yes	under 50 sporadic	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	yes	less than 10, sporadic	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	yes	since early 2000s Many	yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	PDF	No	Yes	Yes	Many	Yes
no	no	pdf	pdf	sometimes	no	yes	Few, other than proactive doc	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	yes	many	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	yes	many	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	no	yes	no	11 since 2007	yes
no	no	no	pdf	yes	no	no	1-15 pages for each year sir	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	no	many since 2009-present	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html, csv	yes	sometimes	sometimes	2009-present, but sporadic	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html	sometimes	no	no	many	yes
no	no	yes	pdf	yes	no	no	under 100	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html, csv	yes	sometimes	sometimes	2009-present, but sporadic	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html, csv	yes	sometimes	sometimes	2009-present, but sporadic	yes
no	no	no	pdf	yes	no	sometimes	many	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html, csv	yes	sometimes	sometimes	2009-present, but sporadic	yes
no	no	no	pdf	sometimes	no	sometimes	mid 2000s/unclear many	yes
no	no	no	na	na	na	na		0 no
no	no	yes	pdf, html, csv	yes	sometimes	sometimes	2009-present, but sporadic	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html, csv	yes	sometimes	sometimes	2009-present, but sporadic	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html	yes	yes	no	1995 - present many	yes
no	no	yes	pdf, html	sometimes	sometimes	no	1989- Present under 200	yes
no	no	no	pdf	yes	no	no	2010-2011: 60 pdf pages	yes
no	no	no	pdf	sometimes	sometimes		dates range under 50	yes
no	no	no	na	na	na	na		0 no
no	no	some	pdf, doc, html	sometimes	sometimes	no	between 2012-2014 under 2	yes
no	no	yes	pdf scans	sometimes	sometimes	no	unclear	yes
no	no	no	pdf, fr number	no	no	no	unclear	yes

Other notes				
(b) (5)				

# FOIA Platform Design Studio

May 30, 2017

# What we will do

**1**

**Introduction**

**2**

**Sketch**

**Round 1**

**Round 2**

**3**

**Wrap up**



# Our goal

- Walk through a problem
- Sketch and share ideas around potential solutions
- Gather ideas and inspiration for a new design

# What you will need

- Paper
- Dark colored sharpie or marker
- #foia-partners

# Ground rules

- Everybody is a peer
- No saying “no” to things
- Everybody draws
- Start with user needs

**Present research+hypotheses [15 min]**

**Prioritization [10 min]**

**Sketch rounds [~30 min]**

- Sketch [10 min]
- Present [ $<2$  min per person]
- Questions [ $<1$  min per person]

**Discussion and wrap up [5 min]**

# Pain point

- Requesters have little insight into the process after submission.
- Requesters report that time estimates are rarely accurate and requesters don't trust them.

# Hypothesis 1

**We believe that:** Creating easy-to-use, centralized, detailed status tracking with push notifications

**Will result in:** Better trust in the FOIA process and its timeline. More insight into the process. Better data around time estimation. Fewer status request calls.

**We will know we are right when:** Fewer status request calls, increased trust, increased knowledge around state of active requests.

**We believe that:** Tracking request data live and better data around time estimation

**Will result in:** Insight into problem areas and advocacy for improvement

**We will know we are right when:** Increased accuracy and trust in time estimates, fewer status request calls

# Pain point

- The submission process is inconsistent between agencies
- The submission mechanism/format varied (email vs web form vs fax vs USPS)
  - frustration with the amount of information required by many agencies
  - significant distrust in reasons for request requirements beyond information required in the statute
  - lack of understanding about the regulatory process behind request requirements
- Lack of trust for reasons behind friction in the process: requesters are dubious about whether differences in submission and response formats and requirements are due to technical limitations or by design

# Hypothesis 2

**We believe that:** Create a single place to submit FOIA requests and tracking/releasing related data

**Will result in:** 1) Allowing improvements to large parts of the request process by  
2) Identifying especially problematic submission requirements  
3) Pushing for improvements to the consistency of the request process

**We will know we are right when:** We create a process that reduces the time to file a request versus the previous process. We have positive usability testing results.



# Pain point

- Submitting a FOIA request is a long and painful process to accessing government information.

# Hypothesis 3

**We believe that:** Publishing more FOIA responsive records / Proactively disclosed documents would make it easier to find government information.

**Will result in:** Public can access more information without filing FOIA. Requesters can have more contextual documents for forming requests.

**We will know we are right when:** Positive usability testing results finding government information.

Name	contact	location	background notes	date referred	referred by	User Type	Tested? (date)	Notes	
(b) (6)					(b) (6)				
		NYC	FOIL expert NYC			Pro but Lay for Federal	11/7/2014	Y in folder	
		DC	Never filed a FOIA request, but works at a Federal agency that receives them.			Lay requester	11/7/2014	Y in folder	
		DC	Has never filed a FOIA request. Has little familiarity with it as a concept.			Lay requester	11/7/2014	Y in folder	
				11/6/2014		Lay requester			
		DC	"I'm a Spanish first year student interested in FOIA, even though I've never filled in a request. My schedule is pretty flexible too."	11/6/2014		Lay requester			
		DC	Hey (b) (6) Thanks for the message. I've never submitted a FOIA request, but am interested in stopping by to do some testing. I'm in CCT to work on issues very aligned with F18's mission so am interested to also learn more about this project!	11/62-14		Lay requester			
						Lay requester			
			Also (b) (6) would be good as a "expert" requestor. He is a part of IRE (Investigative Reporters and Editors), AND an advisor on FOIA Machine – one of the potential folks that might consume an API if we had one.	10/31/2014		Pro requestor			
			"One of my students, (b) (6), would be good for this. He's filed a bunch of FOIAs, but not a ton	10/31/2014		Lay requester			
		DC	Very experienced requester from National Security Archive	11/17/201		Pro requestor			
		DC	I've done a whole lot of FOIA at the state level – mostly in Ohio but also in many other states – but I've only in the last year or so started using the federal law.  I've fiddled around with various mechanisms, making requests by mail, e-mail, the DOJ eFOIA portal, ifoia.org, MuckRock, and the like, but never really loved any of them.	11/6/201		Pro State / Lay Federal requestor		jesse emailed feb 3, 2015	
		DC	I focus mostly on newsgathering technologies in my day job, as well as a whole lot of FOIA. I would absolutely love to help however I can with your FOIA modernization project. Let me know if there's anything I can do! (I'm also in DC a lot, so I'd love to grab coffee to hear more about what you're thinking.); media lawyer – filed ~500 in the last 5 yrs	11/6/201		Pro requestor			
		DC	Communication Graduate Student at George Mason	11/6/201		Lay requester			
		GA	Not sure how much I can help – my first open records request was in high school, from DOD, but since then I've mostly worked with local and state governments.	11/6/201		Pro State / Lay Federal requestor			
		NY	Data Reporter at Reuters, I file a FOIA about once a month, to glean information for stories I'm working on. I've been doing investigative reporting for a couple years and advocate for open government, so I'm probably a bit more versed in foia than the average reporter.	11/6/201		Pro requester		jesse emailed feb 3, 2015	
		Kansas City, MO	No FOIA Background (only aware it exists and hear a lot of gripes over it); Never Filed a Request; Now working at a local TV news station as a producer.	11/24/201		Lay requester			
		San Francisco, CA	Seasoned FOIA requester, expert on copyright, drones, and privacy. Works at EFF.	2/3/201		Professional and personal, experienced		erica emailed 2-4-15	
		Washington, DC	Highly seasoned FOIA requester, privacy and surveillance expert. Works at ACLU.	2/3/201		Professional and personal, experienced			

<b>ID</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quarterly Data URL</b>
1	USIBWC	United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission	<a href="http://www.ibwc.state.gov/home.html/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ibwc.state.gov/home.html/foia/quarterly/</a>
2	USITC	United States International Trade Commission	<a href="http://www.usitc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.usitc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
3	DOJ	Department of Justice	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.justice.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
4	State	United States Department of State	<a href="http://foia.state.gov/Learn/Reports/Quarterly/">http://foia.state.gov/Learn/Reports/Quarterly/</a>
5	DOT	Department of Transportation	<a href="http://www.dot.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dot.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
6	DOE	Department of Energy	<a href="http://www.energy.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.energy.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
7	FLRA	Federal Labor Relations Authority	<a href="http://www.flra.gov/FOIA/quarterly/">http://www.flra.gov/FOIA/quarterly/</a>
8	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	<a href="http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/FOIA/agency/docs/">http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/FOIA/agency/docs/</a>
9	VA	Department of Veterans Affairs	<a href="http://www.foia.va.gov/docs/Quarterly/">http://www.foia.va.gov/docs/Quarterly/</a>
10	DOC	United States Department of Commerce	<a href="http://www.commerce.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.commerce.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
11	Treasury	Treasury	<a href="http://www.treasury.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.treasury.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
12	DHS	Department of Homeland Security	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dhs.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
13	DOI	Department of the Interior	<a href="http://www.doi.gov/foia/upload/">http://www.doi.gov/foia/upload/</a>
14	U.S._DOL	United States Department of Labor	<a href="http://www.dol.gov/dol/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dol.gov/dol/foia/quarterly/</a>
15	ED	Department of Education	<a href="http://www.ed.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ed.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
16	EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.epa.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
17	DoD	Department of Defense	<a href="http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/foia/quarterly/</a>
18	HHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.hhs.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
19	FOMC	Federal Open Market Committee	<a href="http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
20	CFTC	Commodity Futures Trading Commission	<a href="http://www.cftc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.cftc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
21	CO	United States Copyright Office	<a href="http://www.copyright.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.copyright.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
22	U.S._CPSC	United States Consumer Product Safety Commission	<a href="http://www.cpsc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.cpsc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
23	CSB	Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board	<a href="http://www.csb.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.csb.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
24	DNFSB	Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	<a href="http://www.dnfsb.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dnfsb.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
25	Ex-Im_Bank	Export-Import Bank of the United States	<a href="http://www.exim.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.exim.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
26	FCA	Farm Credit Administration	<a href="http://www.fca.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.fca.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
27	FMCS	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	<a href="http://www.fmcs.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.fmcs.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
28	FRB	Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System	<a href="http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
29	FTC	Federal Trade Commission	<a href="http://www.ftc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ftc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
30	IAF	Inter-American Foundation	<a href="http://www.iaf.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.iaf.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
31	NARA	National Archives and Records Administration	<a href="http://www.archives.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.archives.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
32	NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities	<a href="http://www.neh.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.neh.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
33	NMB	National Mediation Board	<a href="http://www.nmb.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.nmb.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
34	NRPC	AMTRAK (National Railroad Passenger Corporation)	<a href="http://www.amtrak.com/foia/quarterly/">http://www.amtrak.com/foia/quarterly/</a>
35	NSF	National Science Foundation	<a href="http://www.nsf.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.nsf.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
36	OGE	United States Office of Government Ethics	<a href="http://www.oge.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.oge.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
37	OMB	Office of Management and Budget	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/foia/quarterly/">http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/foia/quarterly/</a>
38	ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/foia/quarterly/">http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/foia/quarterly/</a>
39	OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation	<a href="http://www.opic.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.opic.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
40	OSHR	Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	<a href="http://www.oshrc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.oshrc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>

41	OSTP	Office of Science and Technology Policy	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/foia/quarterly/">http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/foia/quarterly/</a>
42	PC	Peace Corps	<a href="http://files.peacecorps.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://files.peacecorps.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
43	SEC	United States Securities and Exchange Commission	<a href="http://www.sec.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.sec.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
44	SSA	Social Security Administration	<a href="http://www.ssa.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ssa.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
45	SSS	Selective Service System	<a href="http://www.sss.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.sss.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
46	TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority	<a href="http://www.tva.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.tva.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
47	USNRC	United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission	<a href="http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/foia/quarterly-reports/">http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/foia/quarterly-reports/</a>
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56	CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/foia/quarterly/">https://www.cia.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
57	CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service	<a href="http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/">http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/</a>
58	FCSIC	Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation	<a href="http://www.fcsic.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.fcsic.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
59	FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	<a href="http://www.fdic.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.fdic.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
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62	FMSHRC	Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission	<a href="http://www.fmshrc.gov/sites/default/files/">http://www.fmshrc.gov/sites/default/files/</a>
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85	USPS	United States Postal Service	<a href="https://www.usps.com/foia/quarterly/">https://www.usps.com/foia/quarterly/</a>
86	US_ADF	United States African Development Foundation	<a href="http://www.adf.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.adf.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
87	BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors	<a href="http://www.bbg.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.bbg.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
88	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture	<a href="http://www.dm.usda.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dm.usda.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
89	ACUS	Administrative Conference of the United States	<a href="http://www.acus.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.acus.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
90	CIGIE	Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency	<a href="http://www.ignet.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ignet.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
91	CPPBSD	Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled	<a href="http://www.abilityone.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.abilityone.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
92	CSOSA	Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency	<a href="http://www.csosa.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.csosa.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
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96	USTDA	U.S. Trade and Development Agency	<a href="http://www.ustda.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ustda.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
97	USTR	OFFICE OF THE U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE	<a href="http://www.ustr.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ustr.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
98	AFRH	Armed Forces Retirement Home	<a href="https://www.afrh.gov/foia/quarterly/">https://www.afrh.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
99	RATB	Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board	<a href="http://www.recovery.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.recovery.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>

<b>ID</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quarterly Data URL</b>
1	USIBWC	United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission	<a href="http://www.ibwc.state.gov/home.html/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ibwc.state.gov/home.html/foia/quarterly/</a>
2	USITC	United States International Trade Commission	<a href="http://www.usitc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.usitc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
3	DOJ	Department of Justice	<a href="http://www.justice.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.justice.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
4	State	United States Department of State	<a href="http://foia.state.gov/Learn/Reports/Quarterly/">http://foia.state.gov/Learn/Reports/Quarterly/</a>
5	DOT	Department of Transportation	<a href="http://www.dot.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dot.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
6	DOE	Department of Energy	<a href="http://www.energy.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.energy.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
7	FLRA	Federal Labor Relations Authority	<a href="http://www.flra.gov/FOIA/quarterly/">http://www.flra.gov/FOIA/quarterly/</a>
8	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	<a href="http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/FOIA/agency/docs/">http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/FOIA/agency/docs/</a>
9	VA	Department of Veterans Affairs	<a href="http://www.foia.va.gov/docs/Quarterly/">http://www.foia.va.gov/docs/Quarterly/</a>
10	DOC	United States Department of Commerce	<a href="http://www.commerce.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.commerce.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
11	Treasury	Treasury	<a href="http://www.treasury.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.treasury.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
12	DHS	Department of Homeland Security	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dhs.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
13	DOI	Department of the Interior	<a href="http://www.doi.gov/foia/upload/">http://www.doi.gov/foia/upload/</a>
14	U.S._DOL	United States Department of Labor	<a href="http://www.dol.gov/dol/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dol.gov/dol/foia/quarterly/</a>
15	ED	Department of Education	<a href="http://www.ed.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ed.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
16	EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.epa.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
17	DoD	Department of Defense	<a href="http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/foia/quarterly/</a>
18	HHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.hhs.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
19	FOMC	Federal Open Market Committee	<a href="http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
20	CFTC	Commodity Futures Trading Commission	<a href="http://www.cftc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.cftc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
21	CO	United States Copyright Office	<a href="http://www.copyright.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.copyright.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
22	U.S._CPSC	United States Consumer Product Safety Commission	<a href="http://www.cpsc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.cpsc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
23	CSB	Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board	<a href="http://www.csb.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.csb.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
24	DNFSB	Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	<a href="http://www.dnfsb.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.dnfsb.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
25	Ex-Im_Bank	Export-Import Bank of the United States	<a href="http://www.exim.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.exim.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
26	FCA	Farm Credit Administration	<a href="http://www.fca.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.fca.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
27	FMCS	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	<a href="http://www.fmcs.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.fmcs.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
28	FRB	Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System	<a href="http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
29	FTC	Federal Trade Commission	<a href="http://www.ftc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ftc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
30	IAF	Inter-American Foundation	<a href="http://www.iaf.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.iaf.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
31	NARA	National Archives and Records Administration	<a href="http://www.archives.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.archives.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
32	NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities	<a href="http://www.neh.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.neh.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
33	NMB	National Mediation Board	<a href="http://www.nmb.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.nmb.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
34	NRPC	AMTRAK (National Railroad Passenger Corporation)	<a href="http://www.amtrak.com/foia/quarterly/">http://www.amtrak.com/foia/quarterly/</a>
35	NSF	National Science Foundation	<a href="http://www.nsf.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.nsf.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
36	OGE	United States Office of Government Ethics	<a href="http://www.oge.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.oge.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
37	OMB	Office of Management and Budget	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/foia/quarterly/">http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/foia/quarterly/</a>
38	ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/foia/quarterly/">http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/foia/quarterly/</a>
39	OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation	<a href="http://www.opic.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.opic.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
40	OSHR	Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	<a href="http://www.oshrc.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.oshrc.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>

41	OSTP	Office of Science and Technology Policy	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/foia/quarterly/">http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/foia/quarterly/</a>
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96	USTDA	U.S. Trade and Development Agency	<a href="http://www.ustda.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ustda.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
97	USTR	OFFICE OF THE U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE	<a href="http://www.ustr.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.ustr.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
98	AFRH	Armed Forces Retirement Home	<a href="https://www.afrh.gov/foia/quarterly/">https://www.afrh.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>
99	RATB	Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board	<a href="http://www.recovery.gov/foia/quarterly/">http://www.recovery.gov/foia/quarterly/</a>

# General System Maintenance

## National FOIA Portal Backend

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## Automated Logout

The Automated Logout Drupal module logs users out after a specified time of inactivity.

### Configuration

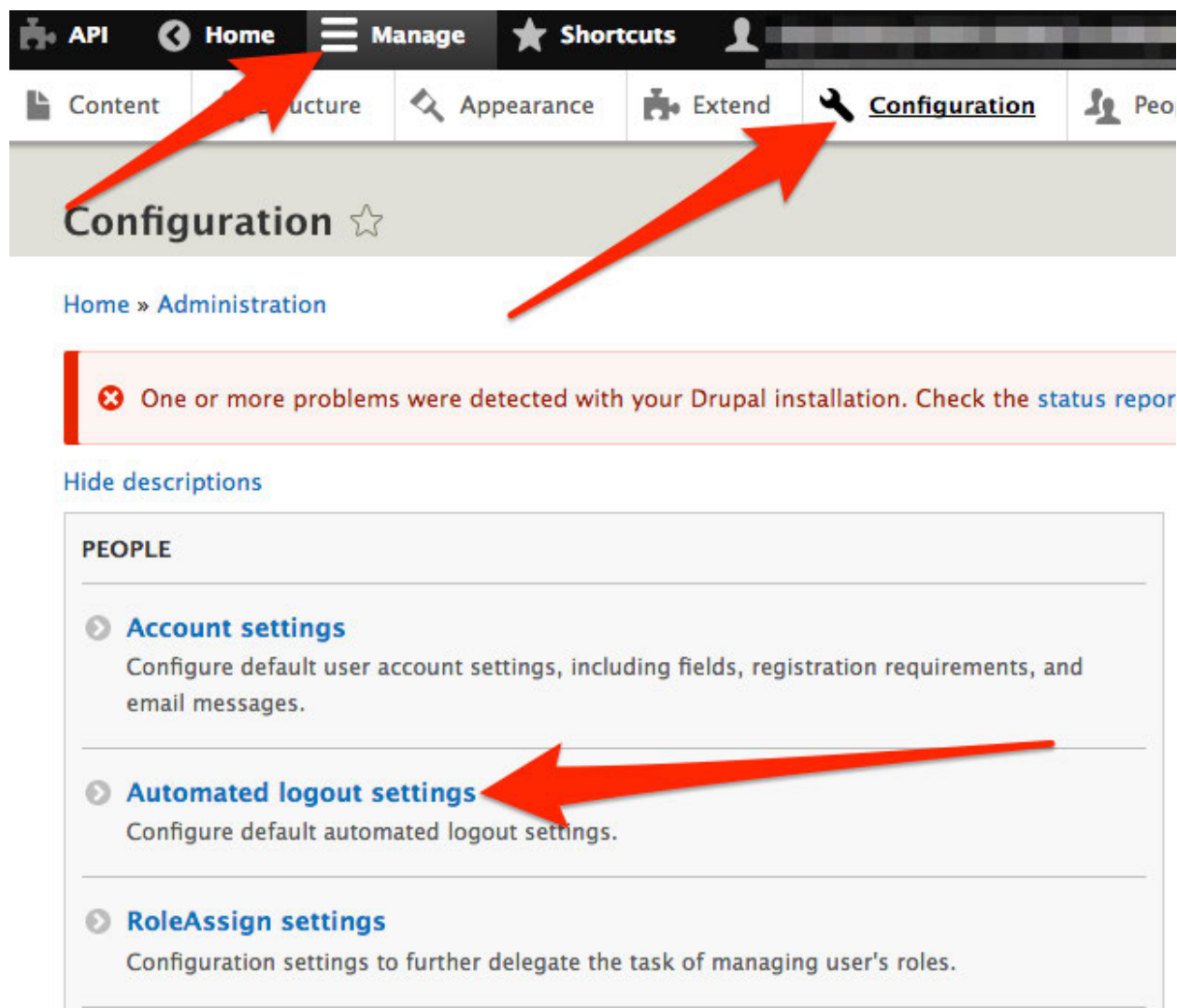
Much of the default configuration is in place for this module. When the Automated Logout module is installed, sensible configuration is loaded. We have not changed those settings since there hasn't been specific direction to do so.

#### Location

Configuration for the Automated Logout module can be found at the following path:

```
/admin/config/people/autologout
```

Or by clicking the Manage link in the toolbar, then the Configuration link, then the “Automated logout settings” link.



## Current Automated Logout Settings

Automated Logout is configured to log all users out after 900 seconds (15 minutes) of inactivity regardless of role. A user has 20 seconds to respond to the logout message before being logged out.

## Parameters likely to change

It could be desirable to set different timeout thresholds for different roles. It could also be desirable to alter the messaging for the logout dialog and after logout messages. These and the other settings can be configured on the single Automated logout settings page.

# Virus Scanning

## Cron

Virus scanning, as described in the System Architecture document, is executed by a scheduled task that scans the files with a Clam AntiVirus command. The scheduled tasks can be seen at

(b) (5)

## File Location

Supporting documentation can be uploaded as part of the end user request process. Upon upload, all such files are saved under (b) (5)

The child of the webform directory will have the machine name of the form that is being submitted to. Beneath those specific webform directories will be directories with the webform submission ID. Those directories will contain the files that are uploaded as part of each submission.

## Processing

When all of the files for an request are marked as clean, the request is processed.

## Review

When a FOIA request is sent off to an agency with success, any files attached to it are deleted off of the server. If it fails, however, the file will live on until it is manually deleted. Regular reviews of the status of FOIA requests can reveal when this happens. It may be desirable to clean these files up periodically, as they will otherwise be scanned each time the virus scanning is executed.

## Entities

Drupal keeps track of virus scanning at the File and FOIA Request levels. All of the files for a given FOIA Request must be processed prior to the request being queued for delivery.

### File

The default virus scan status for file entities is “scan”. This is set when a file is first uploaded as part of a submission, and it is saved in the Drupal File Entity system. A cron task, configured to run every 10 minutes “on the 5s” scans the files and then updates the file entities based on the output of the scan results. Files will be identified by Clam AntiVirus as either OK, Empty file,

Removed., or FOUND. These Clam AntiVirus status will set the Drupal File Entity virus scan status to clean or virus.

Clam AntiVirus Status	Drupal File Entity Status
OK	Clean
Empty file	Clean
Removed.	Virus
FOUND	Virus

## FOIA Request

Similar to file entities, FOIA Request entities go through a process initiated by cron verifying all the files associated with a request are scanned and processed, before queueing the request for delivery. To discover any Request Entities that are not being processed as expected, look at the [FOIA Requests list](#).

A few different checks can be made here. One is filtering the requests status to show only those requests that failed submitting to component. It may be desirable to filter by the submission method as well.

The screenshot shows the 'FOIA Requests' administration page. At the top, there is a header 'FOIA Requests' with a star icon. Below it is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home » Administration » Content'. The main form area contains several filters: 'FOIA Request ID' with a text input field, 'Request Status' with a dropdown menu currently showing 'Failed submitting to component', 'Agency' with a dropdown menu showing '- Any -', 'Agency Component Name' with a text input field, and 'Submission Method' with a dropdown menu showing '- Any -'. There is an 'Apply' button at the bottom left. Three red arrows are overlaid on the image: one pointing to the 'Request Status' dropdown, one pointing to the 'Submission Method' dropdown, and one pointing to the 'Apply' button.

It may be beneficial to look at the oldest FOIA Request Entities to see which ones have failed in sending. This can be done by clicking the next pager on the [FOIA Requests View](#).

## Logs

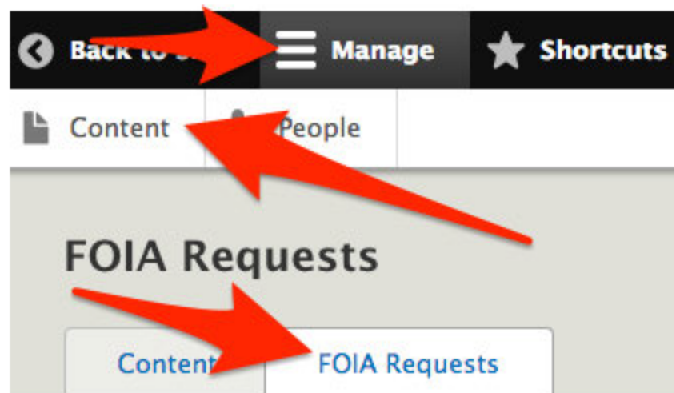
Drupal watchdog logs should reveal if and when file scanning irregularities occur. [Logging is documented in its own section](#).

## FOIA Requests View

The FOIA Requests view (list) can be seen at the following path:

```
/admin/content/foia-requests
```

Or by clicking the Manage link in the toolbar, then the Content link, then the “Foia Requests” tab.



## Configuration

The configuration of this view can be changed in the User Interface (UI) via the Views core module at the following path:

```
/admin/structure/views
```

Or by clicking the Manage link in the toolbar, then the Structure link, then the Views link.



- **Taxonomy**  
Manage tagging, categorization, and classification of your content.
- **Views** ←  
Manage customized lists of content.
- **Webforms**  
Create webforms and manage submissions.

## Location

The FOIA Requests view can then be edited by going to the following path:

`/admin/structure/views/view/foia_requests`

Or by clicking on the Edit button in the FOIA Requests row.

Views ☆

List Settings

Home » Administration » Structure

+ Add view

Filter by view name, machine name, description, or display path

**Enabled**

VIEW NAME	MACHINE NAME	DESCRIPTION	DISPLAYS	OPERATIONS
Contact messages	contact_messages	View and manage messages sent through contact forms.	Page (/admin/structure/contact/messages)	Edit ▾
Content	content	Find and manage content.	Page (/admin/content)	Edit ▾
Custom block library	block_content	Find and manage custom blocks.	Page (/admin/structure/block/block-content)	Edit ▾
Files	files	Find and manage files.	Page (/admin/content/files/usage/) Page (/admin/content/files)	Edit ▾
FOIA Requests	foia_requests		Page (/admin/content/foia-requests)	Edit ▾
Frontpage	frontpage	All content promoted to frontpage	Feed (/rss.xml) Page (/node)	Edit ▾



## Current

The FOIA request view has been configured to display a table of the most important fields, which include all the fields on the FOIA Request Content Type except requester email address and error description. Filters are available for the request id, status, agency, agency component, and submission method. Sorting is by request id descending creating a reverse chronological order listing with the most recent requests displaying first.

**FOIA Requests (FOIA Request)** ☆

[Home](#) » [Administration](#) » [Structure](#) » [Views](#)

**Displays**

Page [+ Add](#)

Edit view name/description ▼

Display name: Page [View Page](#) ▼

**TITLE**  
Title: FOIA Requests

**FORMAT**  
Format: Table | [Settings](#)

**FIELDS** [Add](#) ▼  
FOIA Request: ID (Request ID)  
FOIA Request: Request Status (Status)  
FOIA Request: Created (Time Received)  
FOIA Request: Agency Component (Agency Component)  
FOIA Request: Webform Submission ID (Webform Submission ID)  
FOIA Request: Submission Method (Submission Method)  
FOIA Request: Response Code (Response Code)  
FOIA Request: Case Management ID (Case Management ID)  
FOIA Request: Tracking Number (Case Management Tracking Number)  
FOIA Request: Error Code (Error Code)  
FOIA Request: Error Message (Error Message)  
**FILTER CRITERIA** [Add](#) ▼  
Global: Combine fields filter (exposed)  
FOIA Request: Request Status (grouped)  
(field\_agency\_component: Content) Content: Agency (exposed) | [Settings](#)  
(field\_agency\_component: Content) Content: Title (exposed)  
FOIA Request: Submission Method (exposed)  
**SORT CRITERIA** [Add](#) ▼  
FOIA Request: Created (desc)

**PAGE SETTINGS**  
Path: /admin/content/foia-requ...  
Menu: Tab: FOIA Requests  
Access: Role | Multiple roles

**HEADER** [Add](#)

**FOOTER** [Add](#)

**NO RESULTS BEHAVIOR** [Add](#)

**PAGER**  
Use pager: Mini | Mini pager, 10 items  
More link: No

**▼ ADVANCED**

**CONTEXTUAL FILTERS** [Add](#)  
[field\\_agency\\_component: Content](#)

**RELATIONSHIPS** [Add](#) ▼

**EXPOSED FORM**  
Exposed form in block: No  
Exposed form style: Basic | [Settings](#)

**OTHER**  
Machine Name: page\_1  
Administrative comment: None  
Use AJAX: No  
Hide attachments in summary: No  
Contextual links: Shown  
Use aggregation: No  
Query settings: [Settings](#)  
Caching: Tag based  
CSS class: None

## Parameters likely to change

It may be preferable to change the Webform Submission ID heading to Confirmation ID. This change was made late in the development phase. It may also be desirable to add an exposed filter for the Webform Submission/Confirmation ID field.

The pager for this view would be more useful if it were changed to full from mini. This would allow backend users to jump to the oldest FOIA Request Entities and more easily identify those entities that may need manual processing or indicate the need for further future development.

# Logging

Database logging is disabled in the production environment in favor of syslog to increase performance. Logs will be forwarded to Splunk. Logs can also be viewed through the Acquia interface at

(b) (5) or can be found on the server at (b) (5).

## New user notification

The new user notification was created with the Rules module.

## Configuration

Configuration can be done using Twig syntax for tokens:

```
{{ user.uid.value }}
```

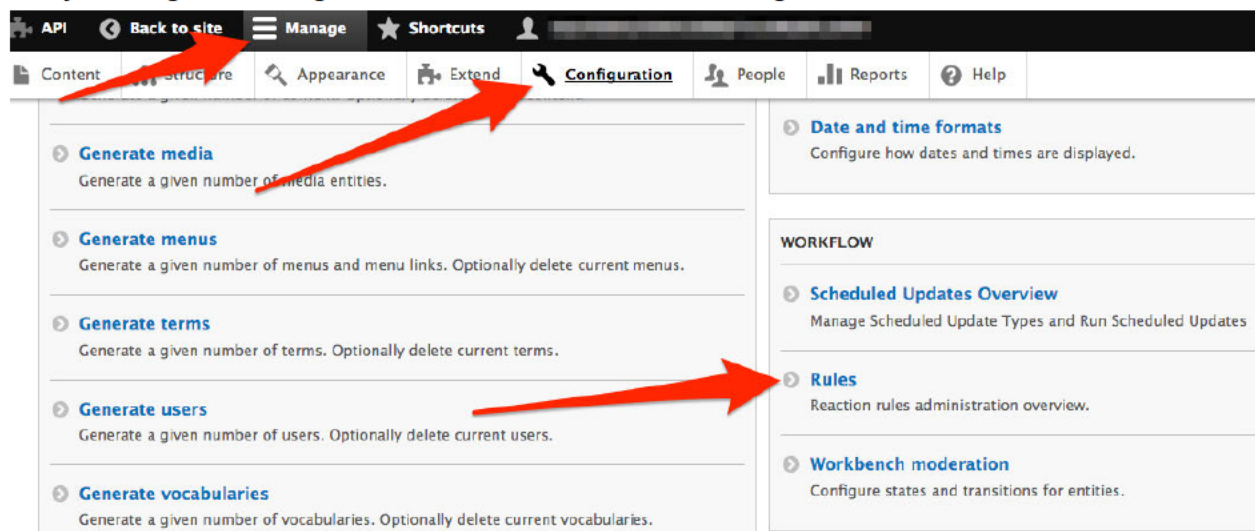
These tokens can easily be discovered by pressing the “Switch to data selection” buttons.

## Location

Configuration for the new user notification can be found at the following path:

(b) (5)

Or by clicking the Manage link in the toolbar, then the Configuration link, then the Rules link.



## Current

The new user notification is configured as a reaction to send an email to [National.FOIAPortal@usdoj.gov](mailto:National.FOIAPortal@usdoj.gov) with a message that includes the user id and name of the user that was created.

## Parameters likely to change

The “SEND TO” email address may change. That should be a single value in the text area with no additional white space nor line breaks. In keeping with the original scope of the project, at the time of initial development the Rules module did not support multiple “SEND TO” email addresses, only single email address can be configured. This is mitigated by the potential to send that email to an email list that can forward copies to multiple addresses if that is desirable.

# RoleAssign

The RoleAssign Drupal module allows us to delegate the responsibility of managing user accounts.

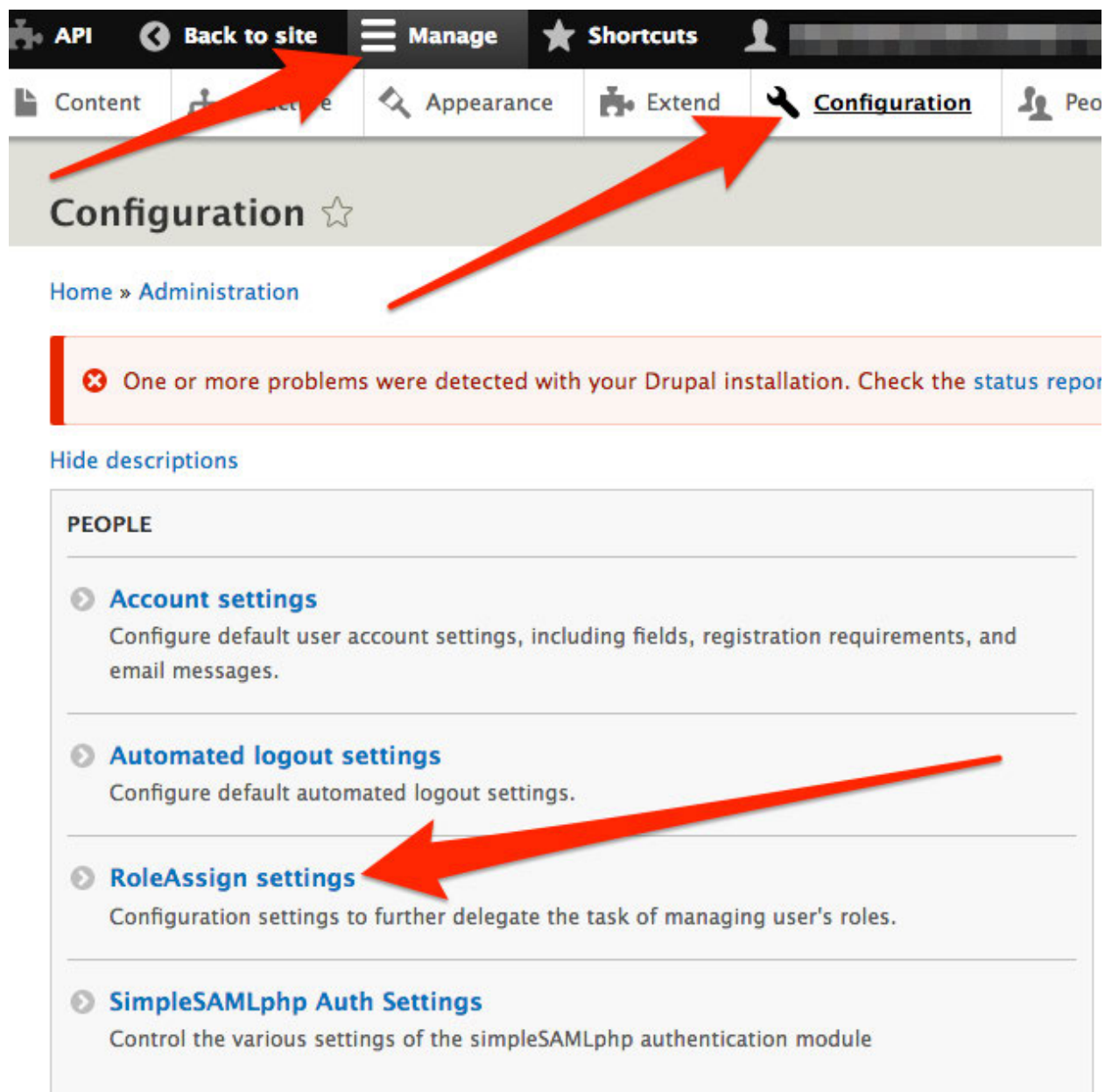
## Configuration

### Location

Configuration for the RoleAssign module can be managed at the following path:

(b) (5)

Or by clicking the Manage link in the toolbar, then the Configuration link, then the “RoleAssign settings” link.



## Current

The current configuration is such that users with the Agency Manager role can be managed by users with the Agency Administrator role. This is accomplished through a combination of the RoleAssign configuration and the assignment of the “Assign roles” permission to the Agency Administrator role.

## Parameters likely to change

This configuration is not likely to change.

# Single Sign On (SSO)

Single Sign On is accomplished via the simpleSAMLphp Authentication Drupal module.

## Configuration

The configuration for simpleSAMLphp Authentication is partially in the Drupal Database and partially in code.

### Location

The portion of the configuration that is in the database is accessible through the UI. The other part is in a directory at the root of the repo named simplesamlphp.

The UI configuration is available at the following path:

(b) (5)

Or by clicking the Manage link in the toolbar, then the Configuration link, then the “SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings” link under the PEOPLE heading.

The screenshot shows the Drupal administration interface. At the top is a navigation bar with links for API, Home, Manage, Shortcuts, and a user profile. Below this is a secondary menu with tabs for Content, Structure, Appearance, Extend, Configuration (highlighted with a wrench icon), and People. A red arrow points from the 'Home' link to the 'Configuration' tab. Another red arrow points from the 'Configuration' tab to the 'Configuration' page title. A third red arrow points from a status message box to the 'SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings' link. The status message box contains a red 'x' icon and the text: 'One or more problems were detected with your Drupal installation. Check the [status report](#)'. Below the status message is a 'Hide descriptions' link. The main content area is titled 'PEOPLE' and contains a list of settings: 'Account settings', 'Automated logout settings', 'RoleAssign settings', and 'SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings'. Each item has a brief description. A red arrow points from the 'SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings' link to the text below it.

Configuration ☆

[Home](#) » [Administration](#)

✖ One or more problems were detected with your Drupal installation. Check the [status report](#)

[Hide descriptions](#)

**PEOPLE**

- **Account settings**  
Configure default user account settings, including fields, registration requirements, and email messages.
- **Automated logout settings**  
Configure default automated logout settings.
- **RoleAssign settings**  
Configuration settings to further delegate the task of managing user's roles.
- **SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings**  
Control the various settings of the simpleSAMLphp authentication module

There are three tabs under the SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings link: Basic settings, Local authentication, & User info and syncing.

The screenshot shows the 'SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings' page. The title is 'SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings ☆'. Below the title are three tabs: 'Basic settings' (which is selected and underlined), 'Local authentication', and 'User info and syncing'.

SimpleSAMLphp Auth Settings ☆

[Basic settings](#) [Local authentication](#) [User info and syncing](#)

## Current

SSO has been configured to use the MAX PIV/CAC Only Security Level authentication context. MAX production and test identity providers are configured for corresponding service provider environments.

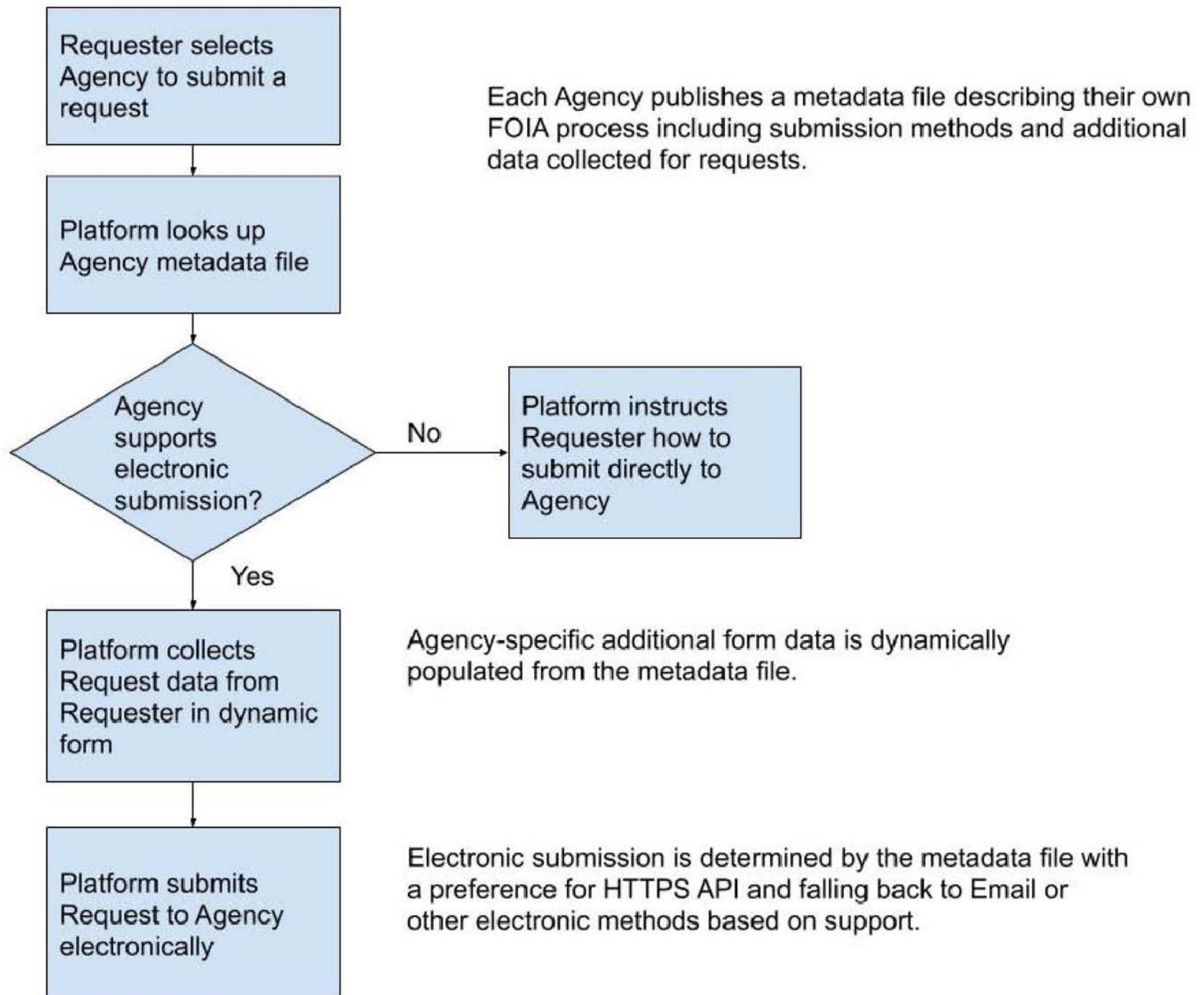
## Parameters likely to change

Altering the authentication context would likely be accomplished by editing or deleting the `AuthnContextClassRef` parameter in the default service provider config found in `authsources.php`.

It may be desirable to check the “Turn on debugging messages” under the DEBUGGING fieldset.

[illegible]





(b) (6)

(notes by Jesse)

on live alpha site  
wow lots of agencies

invision prototype

at FBI landing page

knows Reading Room from domain knowledge  
what is the public liaison at fed level. is this FOIA or fed level...

nav  
submit a request nav or in this an action button

down below  
info doesn't seem as actionable as nav

request online assume pre populated form kind of like FOIA machine

by email  
fancy legal letter  
add to my calendar to track

request by mail is a lot like email but then I have to address it  
"I will never hear back because it's paper"

I like the av response time "frames my expectations"  
I've never understood the difference between simple and complex  
term

where on this page would you click?  
top nav link  
then understood nav bar  
then went to request online

would not call b/c FOIA request need to be in writing

(note FOIA REQUESTS NEED TO BE IN WRITING)

—— IN THE FORM ——

box: thought was picture that didn't load at first  
liked comment to limit by date range..

not sure what supporting documents means or when he'd use it.

felt...ambushed by contact information... thinks you have to set up an account

::: make clear we aren't collection their data!!!

he suggested hiding them and letting them pop out...

Would you start to fill out this form?

JT: more context???

contact info: here is where it gets annoying—where the account info will annoy me

what would you type in this box?  
"I have a form letter and I have a text extension program"  
want machine readable, non-pdf...

name  
email  
phone

"cool you can do a usb stick" << thinks it's a given service  
likes option for digital download

thinks we are handling all this...as host sort of thing  
Oakland uses Scrbd...

fees..  
"this is nice. I don't know how federal fees work"  
unclear last category...

googles "FOIA FBI fee waiver" and then dives into it, notes its a big complex thing on fbi site..

expedited processing

ah..surprised...no account!

no register, inbox verification, etc..."it all adds up"

if don't hear anything in time limit, it's up to me to email the FBI person directly...

not sure if you are exposing the requests...

"I would have poked around how the site works..."

STATE LEVEL: FOIL machine..middle man solving the wrong problem...

"it's easy to make a FOIL request"

"you don't need to putt in

systematically organizing it, esp for agencies...

FOIL machine make it ea ier to add to the me

back to our app

think hi info will be public

had made 40 reque t thi year

que tion for u

what model do we

tate department foia

victor: I came to 18F to work on FOIA, a lot of us from outside of government

(b) (6)

nyc mart phone help you figure out funding for college

bu time i hi favorite app te t top number, get arrival time texted back

FOIA e pre a big fan



[18f.gsa.gov](http://18f.gsa.gov)

# FOIA modernization

December 2014

Jesse Taggart and Shashank Khandelwal

**There are some problems**

**The FOIA requester experience is  
difficult and confusing**

**Which agency has the  
records I need?**



**Where do I submit my request?  
Who do I contact?**

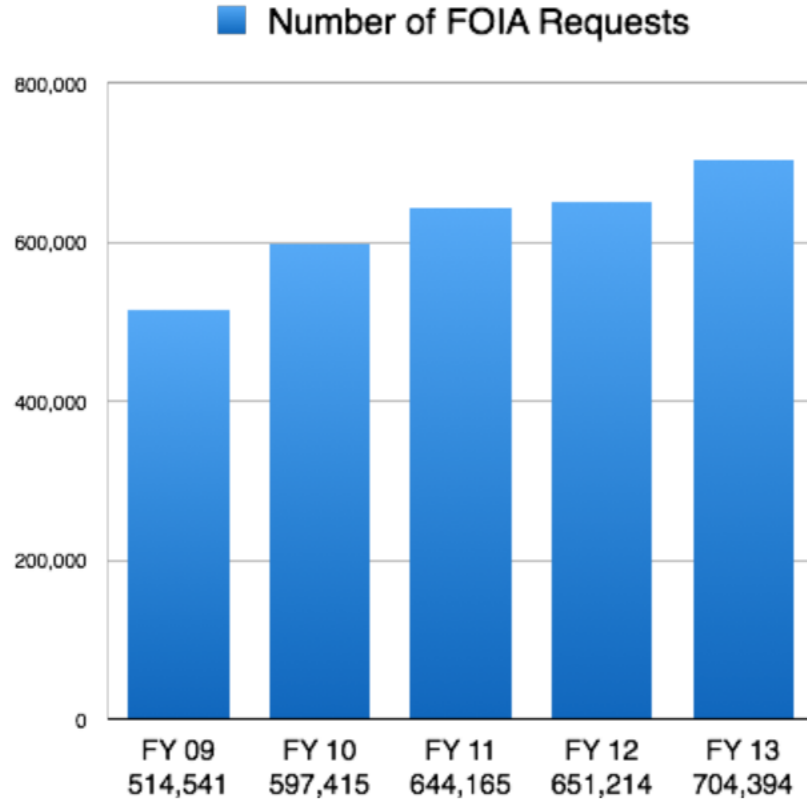
**Email is not efficient**

**Requesters don't know  
the status of their requests.**

**Responsive documents are not available or are hard to find**

**FOIA requests will continue to increase in an increasingly information hungry world.**

**This is the  
new norm**



**The FOIA Hub project aims to  
address many of these issues**

**How are we doing this?**



# Understand needs

## User research summer 2014

# White House FOIA Task Force

EPA, DHS, State, PBGC, GSA, OMB, DOJ, ODNI, OSTP

# **Understand needs II**

## **User research early 2015**

# Build using Agile Methods

## (some) Agile Methods

- Build for user needs
- Cross-functional team
- Build simple as possible to test as often as possible. “know as you go”
- 2 week “sprints”
- Iterative

$^{18}\text{F}$

**Be Accurate**

$^{18}\text{F}$

**Be Transparent**

**Alpha**  
**December 2014**



**Technology + Data**



18F

**Where is the data?**

**contacts**

[foia.gov/foia/FoiaMakeRequest](https://foia.gov/foia/FoiaMakeRequest)

**contacts**

manually constructed data files

**contacts**

[foia.gov/full-foia-contacts.xls](https://foia.gov/full-foia-contacts.xls)

**descriptions/acronyms**

[usa.gov/api/USAGovAPI/contacts.json](https://usa.gov/api/USAGovAPI/contacts.json)

**processing times**

[foia.gov/foia/services/DataProcessTime.jsp](https://foia.gov/foia/services/DataProcessTime.jsp)

**keywords (topics)**

[federalregister.gov/api/v1/articles](https://federalregister.gov/api/v1/articles)

**FOIA libraries**

crawl agency FOIA pages

# **Ensure accuracy URL and Email validations**

**Promote accuracy everywhere.**  
**Share quality data**

361 lines (360 sloc) | 10.318 kb

Raw

Blame

History

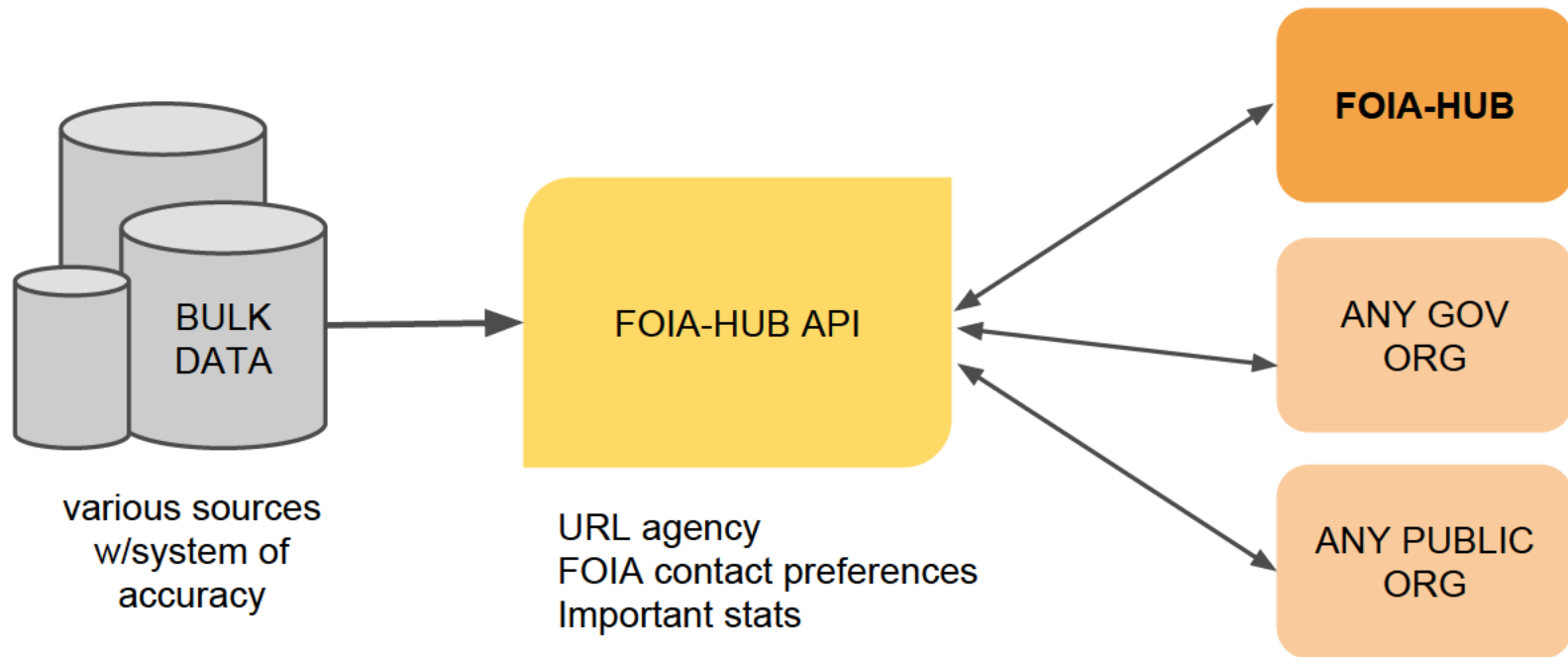


```
1 abbreviation: NARA
2 address:
3 - Joseph Scanlon
4 - FOIA Officer, Office of the General Counsel
5 - Room 3110
6 - 8601 Adelphi Road
7 - College Park, MD 20740
8 departments:
9 - address:
10 - Joseph Scanlon
11 - FOIA Officer, Office of the General Counsel
12 - Room 3110
13 - 8601 Adelphi Road
14 - College Park, MD 20740
15 emails:
16 - foia@nara.gov
17 fax: 301-837-0293
18 foia_officer: 'Joseph Scanlon, Phone: (301) 837-3642'
19 name: Main Office
20 notes: This agency has additional FOIA contact information that can be found by
21 visiting its website.
22 phone: 301-837-3642
23 public_liaison: 'Gary Stern, Phone: (301) 837-2024'
24 reading_rooms:
25 - - Electronic Reading Room
26 - http://www.archives.gov/foia/electronic-reading-room.html
27 service_center: 'Phone: (301) 837-3642'
28 top_level: false
29 website: http://www.archives.gov/foia/index.html
```

# Bulk data

# Application Programming Interface

# API strategy





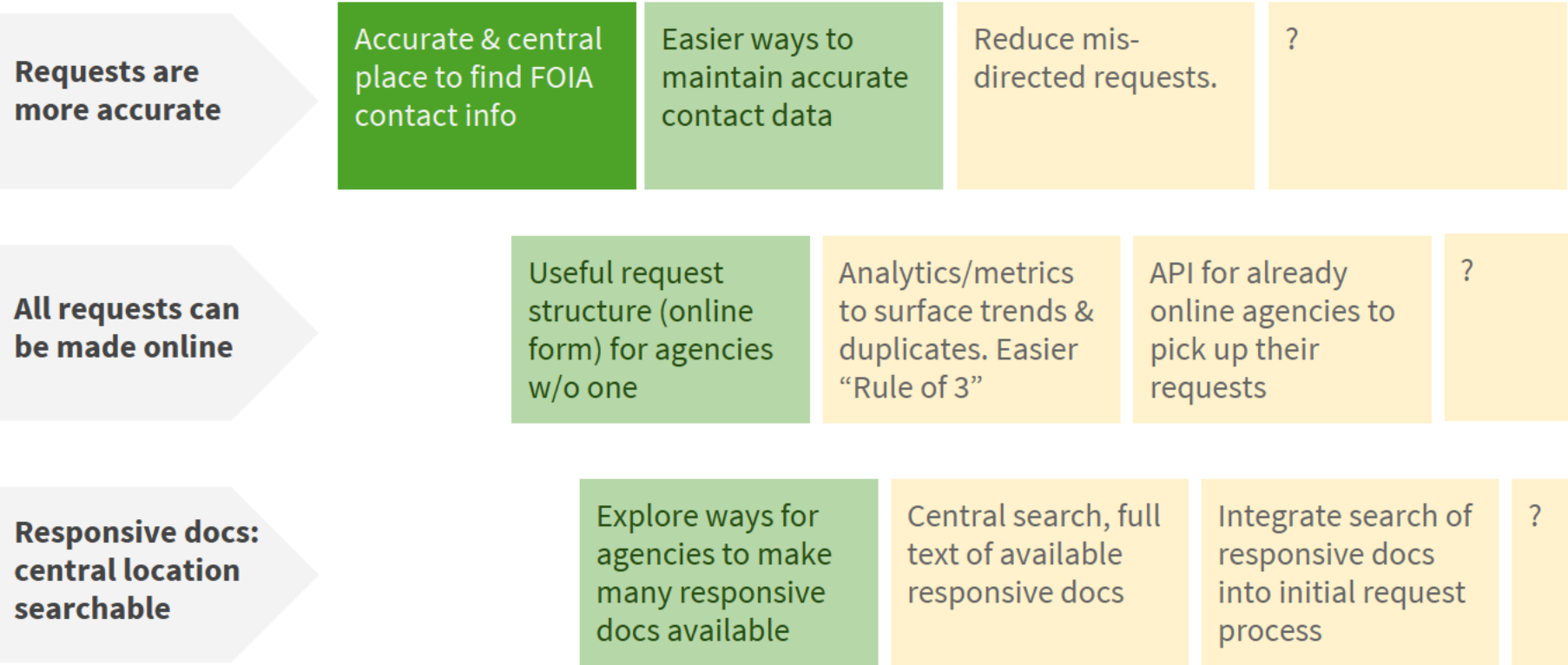
The logo consists of a solid blue square. Inside the square, the text "18F" is written in a white, sans-serif font. The "1" and "8" are joined together, and the "F" is separate.

18F

**Open Source**

**What next?**

# FOIA Hub Feature Map



**Participate in the process**

**Help us understand what a good request is from your experience.**

The logo consists of a solid blue square. Inside the square, the text "18F" is written in a white, sans-serif font. The "1" and "8" are joined together, and the "F" is a simple, bold character.

18F

**Show us how you work**

The logo consists of a solid blue square. Inside the square, the text "18F" is written in a white, sans-serif font. The "1" and "8" are connected, and the "F" is separate.

18F

**Co-design with us**



# Speak up

**email:** [18f-foia@gsa.gov](mailto:18f-foia@gsa.gov)

**web:** [github.com/18F/foia/issues](https://github.com/18F/foia/issues)



# The FOIA team at 18F

**Jackie Kazil**

**Shashank Khandelwal**

**Raphael Majma**

**Eric Mill**

**Jesse Taggert**

**Gabriel Ramirez**

**Victor Zapanta**

A bald eagle is shown in flight, wings spread wide, against a clear blue sky. The eagle's head is white, and its body is dark. At the bottom of the image, there is a dark silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees.

# Thank you

[18f-foia@gsa.gov](mailto:18f-foia@gsa.gov)

# Usability testing guide

## Overview

Throughout the discovery and build process, 18F has been conducting regular research and usability tests. You can find some notes from our research here: <https://github.com/18F/foia-recommendations/blob/master/research-synthesis-requesters.md>

We strongly recommend that usability testing be integrated into the regular operations & maintenance of [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov/).

The purpose of this guide is to get you started with usability testing. For further reading, the [usability.gov](https://www.usability.gov/guide-to-usability-testing/) guide to usability testing is a good start: <https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/planning-usability-testing.html>

The purpose of usability testing is to learn about how you might improve an experience by talking to and observing your actual users, rather than *guessing* at their experience. We believe that this sort of usability research data results in a far better product.

## How to test

We recommend you conduct tests with at least two participants: a moderator (for the purposes of this document, I will presume this is *you*) and a note-taker.

After identifying the scope of your test, create a scenario that you believe might be representative of a typical user. Present the scenario to the user, and have them walk through the experience as if they were going through the actual situation. It may be tempting, but do your best not to nudge the user in the "right" direction.

Remember that your role is to objectively measure the usability of the experience, not to advocate for it.

Instead, almost all interactions you have with the user should be to ask them questions about their thinking process and their interactions.

After you've identified a scope and scenario, you will reach out to a subset of users. For instance, do you want to focus on experienced requesters, occasional requesters, or new requesters? Do you want to focus on attorneys, journalists, academics, or individuals?

FOIA Mapper has the most thorough research I've come across on who are filing requests:

<https://foiamapper.com/who-uses-foia/>

FOIA Mappers' data indicates the following breakdown of FOIA requests by category among 85 agencies in their dataset:

- Businesses (39%)
- Law firms (16.7%)
- News Media (7.6%)
- Nonprofits (7.5%)
- Universities (20.1%)
- Uncategorized (4.6%)

Note that this is an aggregate of all the agencies they researched. The profile for individual agencies is entirely different. Ultimately, I recommend that testing be conducted with users across these various groups to ensure that any unique use cases be considered and prioritized accordingly.

## What to test

Later in this guide is an example test based upon the requester experience that 18F focused on. You can apply these same principles to any part of the experience, to answer questions such as:

- How are people discovering [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov/)? Does the site's content and features match their needs? Who are the different goals of people visiting the site? (These questions can be found via user interviews, perhaps using a user research intercept like [ethn.io](https://ethn.io/))
- Are users using the search function? If so, do search results meet their expectations?
- Who is consuming the "Learn about FOIA" content? Are they able to find the information they need?

- Who uses the reporting data on [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov)? What are they trying to learn from the data? How might we improve the presentation of data for those users? Do they use the visualizations?
- Are agencies able to successfully update their information on [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov)?

When testing the overall product experience, ensure that whatever scenario you use will allow you the opportunity to test new features and new content.

Tests should be conducted using live code when possible, though if live code isn't available, it is possible to conduct usability tests on designs using tools like Invision.

### Example outreach email

I'm [name] from the Department of Justice's [team name], and I'm helping improve [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov). We're looking for volunteers to test the new portal. No FOIA requesting experience is necessary, but please let us know if you happen to have submitted a request in the past. We expect the test to take about 40 minutes.

If you're willing to participate, please select a time slot that would work for you:  
[time slots]

If none of these times work for you, please let me know and we'll hopefully figure out an alternative time.

### Example brief

Thank you for your participation in this usability test. My name is [your name] and I work for the Department of Justice's [describe your team].

Also with me is [note taker's name] who will help by taking notes today.

Our goal today is to get feedback on the National FOIA Portal that we're building. Your feedback will help us understand how we can create the best portal experience possible for the public.

A few things before we begin:

- I'm going to ask you to "think out loud" as you walk through the website today. I know it can feel a little unintuitive, but as you scan the website,

please read any text that you would read if you were visiting the site on your own.

- Additionally, before you click or interact with any object on the screen, please pause and tell us before you do, so that we can have a chance to ask you questions.
- As we walk through this experience I'm going to ask you some questions that might seem obvious. That's just our way of avoiding any assumptions about the experience.
- Finally, there are no right or wrong answers. Our goal today is to objectively measure how successful or unsuccessful the experience is.
- Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to end this interview at any point. The notes will only be shared internally at the Department of Justice.
- We expect this interview to take about 45 minutes.
- Do you have any questions for me before you get started? You can also ask questions at any point during the interview.

Example scenario prompt

### **Initial scenario**

You are conducting research around the federal government's response to Hurricane Harvey, which occurred in summer of 2017. You are interested in any communications that may have occurred between federal agencies and the mayor of Houston, Texas. After a bit of searching, you've come across [foia.gov](https://www.foia.gov). Please walk us through how you would go about getting this information.

### *Notes/observations*

- We do not prompt the user on the specific agency. We can presume that FEMA would be the most likely target of such a request.
- Does the requester correctly identify FEMA as a relevant agency? How do they attempt to identify the relevant agency? If they open a new tab and conduct a Google search, allow them to. Only consider nudging them towards FEMA if they are at a complete loss. And even then, I recommend you nudge them within the conceit of the scenario. For instance, "let's say after searching for the correct agency and not finding anything, a colleague directs you to try submitting the request to FEMA".
- Does the user understand that FEMA is under DHS? Do they attempt to submit the request to DHS or to FEMA?

- Does the user independently attempt to search for relevant information outside of FOIA/the portal? If yes, are they successful at finding relevant information?
- Does the user correctly fill out the request form? Where do they get stuck? Is the request well-formed and scoped? If not why not? What sort of information might you provide to the user to help them create a better request?
- After submitting the request, ask the user how long they expect the request to take. Do you believe their estimate is accurate? Is it based upon the average processing times displayed, or based upon their own experience?
- Does the user understand the difference between a complex and simple request?
- After submitting the request, what does the user expect to happen next in the process? Are they correct? If not, how might we set up more accurate expectations for the requesting experience?

## Secondary scenario

After 2 months, you haven't heard any sort of response from the agency. You've come back to foia.gov. What do you do next?

### *Notes/observations*

- Does the user find the agency contact info?
  - Prompt the user to ask what they would do with that contact info. Would they contact the agency? Would they call, email, or write the agency (this can help inform which information to visually prioritize).
- Does the user attempt to find a status tracker?
- Does the user attempt to search via a tracking number of some sort?
- Which contact would the user reach out to?

## Usability synthesis

A usability synthesis is the documentation of the findings from usability testing. This is the most concrete deliverable coming out of usability testing. The usability moderator (a UX designer if possible) along with a team member who observed several of the tests go over the notes and identify key usability issues that arose.

Those are then captured, and the issues that arose most are documented and scored by the Nielsen Usability ratings scale:

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-to-rate-the-severity-of-usability-problems/>

For instance, a “Usability catastrophe” is scored as a 5, and given high priority for the team to address. An example of a usability catastrophe would be if users were completely confused by the language in the request form, and as a result, gave up on filing the request. Another would be if a user were unable to understand the agency finder on the homepage, resulting in them again, not filing a request.

A “Minor usability problem” would be scored as a 2, and given low to medium priority for the team to address. An example of a minor usability problem would be if a user were prompted to file a request with an agency, and clicked on multiple irrelevant links before eventually arriving at the correct agency’s request form.

You can find more information on the Nielsen Usability ratings scale at the link above.

You can find an example usability synthesis here:

<https://github.com/18F/foia-recommendations/blob/master/usability-testing-synthesis.md>